



## **ADMINISTRATION, MILITARY AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF BENISHANGUL NATION**



**From 1880 - 2009**

**December-2019**

**Assosa, Ethiopia**

**Pictures on the cover page: - is BPLM military on the Military parade, Assosa,**

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Assosa Benishangul Ethiopia

### **Dedication.**

To the memory of all BPLM martyrs and all Benishangul civilian who died struggling for justice, equality and a self-ruling in Ethiopia

## Abstract

The former Benishangul country historically is known to be from Sinnar to Birbir, Amfilo-to Galabat to the border of Eritrea. Benishangul community are the borderline community cosmologically are from both countries of Ethiopia and Sudan. In this study neither Benishangul, Bartha, Tornasi and Watawit was the name of the ethnic group. Berta, Tornasi and Watawit seemed to be the name of clan within funj- hamaj but Hamaj also is pejorative word toward some part of Funj. Benishangul is a territory where Tornasi, Funj, Bartha, Watawit and few Hamaj of Fasaqalu and of jebel Gule used to live. This community also are the community faced atrocity, discrimination since the imperial time of Menelik and was people who showed their desperately rival and confrontation since the 1880's toward the emperor on Benishangul land accordingly. Finally, BPLM was born in 1976/7 after the demises of Aljebeha Wataniya due to Sudan's government pressure. BPLM was the brand movement of Benishangul community with a clear scientific, modern and inclusive objective and strategy of the new progressive nation.

**Keywords:** -Benishangul people, BPLM struggle, country of asylum, founders, fragmentation of rulers, identity question, political symbolism,

## Introduction

### Background to the study

This study was focused on the origins and evolution of Benishangul's rebellious movement since imperial time, Movement of Aljebha wateniya (BNF) to the later Benishangul people liberation movement (BPLM), that appeared approximately 34 years ago and has determined plentiful role in current Ethiopia's political advancement.

This study is mainly a description of political and military history but also intends to address general sociological issues of ethnic-based inequality, political conflict, social mobilization and a groundbreaking armed confrontation in Ethiopia.

In this Introduction the researcher tried to outline the main issues of the study and present arguments for the relevance of the extended case study for the understanding of conditions for armed rebellion in Ethiopian and recent Benishangul Gumuz political history in particular. In the historical era neither the 'national integration policy of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974) nor the 'Ethiopia First slogan of the military Dergue regime (1974-1991), which crossbred Ethiopian nationalism with Marxism, brought the democracy in Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup> This problem helped in the rising tide of ethnic-nationalist rebellion.<sup>2</sup> The regime of the Emperor was confronted by ethnonational and regional armed movements across all corners of the country from 1942—1991 including the struggle of Eritrea for independence.<sup>3</sup> The Dergue also had encountered another upsurge of ethnonational movements, some of them 'inherited' from the era of the previous regime and that ultimately carried its death up until 1991.<sup>4</sup> Both these regimes collapsed in the face of the sustained attack of primarily ethnic-based national liberation movements and to a certain extent of forces of change at the center.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

<sup>2</sup> Michael Weldeghiorghis Tedl august 2014. *The Eritrean Liberation Front: Social and Political Factors Shaping Its Emergence, Development and Demise, 1960-1981.*

<sup>3</sup> Akinola, Olufemi a. (2007), 28(2): 47-86 *Politics and identity construction in Eritrean studies, c. 1970-1991: the making of Vioxx Erythree*

<sup>4</sup> Wondwosen Teshome B. 2009 *Ethiopian Opposition Political Parties and Rebel Fronts: Past and Present*

<sup>5</sup> A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): *Revolt, Ideology and Mobilization in Ethiopia Aregawi Berhe, Amsterdam 2008*

One of the ethnic-nationalist movements which led the uprising against the military regime from 1976 to 1991 for ethnic Identity was the Benishangul people Liberation movement (BPLM), which is the most subject matter of this study. The BPLM started its struggle to ensure 'self-ruling led ethnic Identity and existence of the recent region of Benishangul Gumuz within Ethiopian community. It entered into its armed struggle with the ideology of ethnonationalism and ethnic Identity.<sup>6</sup> Ethnicity mixed with the question of the territory was the major mobilizing factor of the people of Benishangul for self-ruling. Self-determination' for every ethnonational group in Ethiopia was also supported as a slogan that in turn attracted numerous marginalized groups, some of which finally helped BPLM to contribute to the formation of new Ethiopia and new Benishangul Gumuz in 1991.<sup>78</sup> In 1991 after pursuing a fifteen years' prolonged movement, the ethnic-nationalist BPLM finally managed to self-rule as a regional state with congregations of local and external factors contributing to its success. But after the fall of Dergue and distinction of BPLM as an independent military force and independent sovereign regional state in 1991-1992 the OLF have openly challenged and fired to the BPLM which lasted for three years and costed loss of material and human lives. But it finalized by defeating the huge troops of OLF from the land of Benishangul.<sup>9</sup> With the realization of some spark of self-ruling and ethnic Identity, one might assume that in post-1994 Benishangul's self-ruling and ethnic Identity, justice and development question would have a better chance of being resolved.<sup>10,11</sup> Yet after almost 5 years of controversies and experimentation, the question of self-ruling, justice and development not gone away but grown into new forms, by changing its form into indirect centralization, intra-regional and intra-tribal resentment.<sup>12</sup> The realization of democratic governance, self-ruling ethnic Identity especially for Benishangul community who played a tremendous role in the liberation movement

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<sup>6</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>7</sup> Informant Yousif Hamid Nasir, Wednesday, January 18, 2019, 3:02:08 AM Australia

<sup>8</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 2009 Ethiopian Opposition Political Parties and Rebel Fronts: Past and Present

<sup>10</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>11</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>12</sup> Informant commander Atieb Ahmed Assosa March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

or to the rest of the Benishangul indigenous nations for that matter, remained a debatable point.<sup>13, 14</sup>

## Research Questions and Scope of the Study

Considering the problem statement, the case study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What was the administration and struggle of the Benishangul community from the imperial time that paved the legacy way to the recent struggle of 21<sup>st</sup> c?
2. How did the BPLM as a movement appeared and developed?
3. What was the socio-economic and political motive for the emergence of the movement?
4. What were the aims and objectives of the political movement of BPLM?

The study focuses on the period from the 1880s to 2009, since this period marked by the struggle of Benishangul local ruler, the birth of Aljebeha Alwataniya and later BPLM, the collapse of the BPLM, the transition to Ethiopia Berta people national democratic organization and the great question of article 47 of the self-independent state as a nation. Following the delimitation of the scope, the period prior to the establishment of the BPLM will be seen to provide historical background.

## General objective

To explore the political and socio-economic history of Benishangul nation in Benishangul Gumuz region since imperial time

### 3.1. Specific Objectives

Retrospective analysis of the Benishangul nation led the armed struggle for national self-rule endeavored to

1. Explore the root causes of the ethnic-nationalist and identity movement in Benishangul via in-depth description and secondary data.

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<sup>13</sup> Informant commander Bushra Alkerib Assosa March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>14</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan Assosa March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

2. Analyze the specific socio-political and economic factors that prompted the formation of the BPLM which led the rebellion up to the end of recent times.
3. Examine was the objective and whether the anticipated goals of the ethnic-nationalist and ethnic identity revolt were clear to all participants, and/or were achieved from the perspectives of the movement group and critical mass behind them.
4. How did the BPLM as a movement appeared and developed?
5. How was the administration, struggle of the Benishangul community from the imperial time that paved the legacy way to the recent struggle of 21st c?

### The relevance of the Study

In fragment due to the long-drawn and out fighting that Benishangul nation as whole and BPLM, in particular, went through until 1991 and due to political sensitivities, the history of the Benishangul armed struggle in general and that of the BPLM, in particular, had never been researched. No works that have already been published that give emphasis on the formation, the problem come across the objective, strategy, the critical mass behind the movement and victorious movements of the BPLM. Furthermore, the existing Zonal and regional officials give no consideration to the history of the Benishangul and BPLM in particular, and the group suffering a lot from biased treatment. Hence, to this time the BPLM group failed to receive the level of logical attention that remotely corresponds to their importance.

Having done so, it is the hope and persuasion of the researcher that this study played its part in filling a gap in Benishangul historiography and to make a partial contribution towards understanding the developments leading to Benishangul recent history of today's self-ruling. It also informed the new generation about the start-up of Benishangul rivals, BPLM and its contribution to recent Ethiopia. And finally, it provided at least paper-based recognition for top conceptionalist and founder of the movement.

## Arrangement /organization of the study

For the purpose of the organization, this study will be divided into 6 chapters.

Chapter one: -Historical Background to the BPLM startup for self-rule which is intended to serve as a background of the study. It attempts to examine the origins of the political development in Benishangul land and territory since imperial time.

Chapter two: Early History of Benishangul Sheikhdoms' administration and politics (1880's).

Chapter three: Benishangul marginalization and Emergence of the Benishangul nationalism front (Aljebha wateniya)1976

Chapter four: The Birth of the BPLM, under Broadening the war and Disintegration of BPLM as the military wing

Chapter five: Transitional periods, demises of BPLM and tragedy story of EPRDF toward Benishangul region 1995----2009

Chapter sex: Why BPLM-phobia in the considerate community of Benishangul nation.

## Theoretical Considerations

According to Natalino Ronzitti a war of national liberation is defined as an “armed struggle waged by a people through its liberation movement against the established government to reach self-determination and self-ruling.<sup>1516</sup> From a different perspective these wars are often called insurgencies or rebellions.<sup>17</sup> The definition of application of “wars of state liberation” is further elaborated by who outlined the different types of armed conflict to which the term has been applied.<sup>18</sup>On the other hand, Pangalangan and Gouritin in their paper tilted The Privileged Status of National Liberation Movements under International Law, provide a different perspective on the types of armed conflicts. In their expression: Parties to an armed conflict, other than states, are legally classified – “along a continuum of ascending intensity” – as (1) rebels, (2) insurgents or (3) belligerents. Rebellion

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<sup>15</sup> Wondwosen Teshome B. 2009 *Ethiopian Opposition Political Parties and Rebel Fronts: Past and Present*

<sup>16</sup> Gouritin, A. (2011) *War by Contract*.

<sup>17</sup> Will Kimillicka, Ruth Rubio Marin June 1999, *Liberation and minority right*

<sup>18</sup> *Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa Select papers from the Nordic Africa Documentation Project workshop 26–27 November 2009, Pretoria, South Africa*



consists of a sporadic challenge to the established government, but which remains “susceptible to rapid suppression by normal procedures of internal security”; it is within the domestic jurisdiction of the state.<sup>19</sup>

Insurgency is a “half-way house between essentially ephemeral, spasmodic or unorganized civil disorders and the conduct of an organized war between contending factions within a State.” The material conditions for a condition of belligerency are (1) the existence of an armed conflict of a general character; (2) occupation by the insurgents of a substantial portion of the national territory; (3) an internal organization capable and willing to enforce the laws of war; and (4) circumstances which make it necessary for outside states to define their attitude by means of recognition of belligerency.<sup>20</sup>

In such sort of categorization one can observe the application of geo-military criteria as the basis for the characterization of armed conflicts. Having laid down some clarification on the meaning and representation of the term ‘war of national liberation’, let us have a look into some relevant approaches for understanding and explaining the cause(s) behind political violence.<sup>21</sup>

What is it that mobilizes people to participate in a radical and high-risk strategic protest? Why did the Benishangul people eventually resort to taking up arms and carry out the bloody war that went on decades? no researchers have offered to know and find adequate scientific explanations behind this kind of political violence.

The above question can be approached through the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT). Gurr defines RDT in psychosocial terms as: “a perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully

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<sup>19</sup> *The Indigenous Peoples’ Movement: Theory, Policy, and Practice* by Dr. Duane Champagne Professor March 13, 2008

<sup>20</sup> F. Francioni and N. Ronzitti (eds). 2011, *War by Contract: Human Rights, Humanitarian Law and Private Contractors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Pp. 532. £95. ISBN 9780199604555.

<sup>21</sup> *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilization in Ethiopia* Aregawi Berhe, Amsterdam 2008

entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining.<sup>22</sup>

Ethnic identity is one dimension of the self that has received much empirical and theoretical attention in the social sciences, given its wide-ranging implications for, inter alia, intergroup relations.<sup>23</sup>

Some of the major debates on ethnic identity include issues around its contribution to the self, how individuals cope with threats to the self, and what motivates individuals and groups to defend it. Given the focus upon motivational principles associated with identity processes in IPT it is suggested that the theory possesses much heuristic value for understanding these issues.<sup>24</sup> IPT proposes that the structure of identity should be conceptualized in terms of its content and value/affect dimensions and that this structure is regulated by two universal processes, namely the assimilation–accommodation process and the evaluation process.<sup>25</sup> The assimilation–accommodation process refers to the absorption of new information in the identical structure and the adjustment which takes place in order for it to become part of the structure. The evaluation process confers meaning and value on the contents of identity, Dickson and university, Department of Anthropology, 2015, Elling, 2016.<sup>26</sup>

The construct, ethnic identity, can best be understood through an examination of its etymological origins. The term *ethnic* has Latin and Greek origins – *Ethnicus* and *Ethnikas* both meaning nation. It can and has been used historically to refer to people as heathens. *Ethos*, in Greek, means custom, disposition or trait. *Ethnikas* and *ethos* took together therefore can mean a band of people (nation) living together who share and acknowledge common customs. The second part of the construct, *identity*, has Latin origins and is derived from the word *Identitas*; the

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<sup>22</sup> *Theories of ethnicity and the dynamics of ethnic change in multiethnic societies* Richard E. Blanton February 2015.

<sup>23</sup> *The Indigenous Peoples' Movement: Theory, Policy, and Practice* by Dr. Duane Champagne Professor March 13, 2008

<sup>24</sup> *The construction of ethnic identity: Insights from identity process theory* Article October 2012.

<sup>25</sup> John Solomon and Les Back, 1995 v38 n3 p407, 14. *Marxism, racism and ethnicity*.

<sup>26</sup> Elling, Rasmus Christian; Saleh, Alam 216. *Ethnic Minorities and the Politics of Identity in Iran*.

word is formed from *idem* meaning the *same*. Thus, the term is used to express the notion of sameness, likeness, and oneness. More precisely, identity means “the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 620). Combining the definitions and interpretations of identity and ethnicity it can be concluded that they mean, or at minimum imply, the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs, traditions, historical experiences, and in some instance’s geographical residence. At one level of interpretation the combined definition is sufficient to capture the manner in which the identity is generally conceptualized and used to understand ethnocultural influences on its formation and development. At another level identity is almost synonymous with ethnicity prompting some sociologists like Herbert Gans to suggest that identity is no longer a useful term.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, because of its increasing popularity identity is rapidly becoming a cliché and therefore more and more difficult to understand (Gleason, 1996).<sup>28</sup>

Definitions of ethnic identity vary according to the underlying theory embraced by researchers’ and scholars’ intent on resolving its conceptual meanings. The fact that there is no widely agreed-upon definition of ethnic identity is indicative of the confusion surrounding the topic.<sup>29</sup> Typically, ethnic identity is an affiliative construct, where an individual is viewed by themselves and by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. An individual can choose to associate with a group especially if other choices are available (i.e., the person is of mixed ethnic or racial heritage).<sup>30</sup> Affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors. Racial factors involve the use of physiognomic and physical characteristics, natal factors refer to “homeland” (ancestral home) or origins of individuals, their parents, and kin, and symbolic factors include those

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<sup>27</sup> Alicia Fedelina Chávez, Florence Guido-DiBrito 1999, *Racial and Ethnic Identity and Development*.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph E. Trimble and Ryan Dickson, 2012, *Ethnic Identity Western Washington University*

<sup>29</sup> Akinola, Olufemi a. (2007), 28(2): 47-86 *Politics and identity construction in Eritrean studies, c. 1970-1991: the making of Vioxx Erythree*

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Nicholas DeFilippo’s *Portland Summer 8-13-2015 A Queer Liberation Movement*, State University

factors that typify or exemplify an ethnic group (e.g., holidays, foods, clothing, artifacts, etc.).

Symbolic ethnic identity usually implies that individuals choose their identity, however to some extent the cultural elements of the ethnic or racial group have a modest influence on their behavior.<sup>31</sup>

## Methodology

The materials that form the basis of this study was collected from two different types of sources consisting of both primary and secondary accounts. Since the literature on the subject in question is very limited, the researcher will be compelled to focus essentially on two types of qualitative data collection approaches, namely, archival research and interviews,

Archival materials are an important source of information for developing an understanding of an episode. They are first-hand accounts. They serve as evidence not only in developing an interpretation but also in building an argument to endorse that interpretation. Realizing this, archival materials such as organizational programs and structures, statements, declarations and communiqués, correspondence, political manuals, military intelligence, and diplomatic reports, newspapers, journals, audio-visual materials, etc. produced within the time period in question by the BPLM in Sudan and Hegeesalam was consulted extensively and analyzed thoroughly.

A substantial proportion of the data has been gathered over a period of six months by going through (i) unpublished written materials; (ii) analog and digital audio and video records and photographs. Many of these records have been collected from records recorded in the field during the war of independence in the form of interviews and as oral narratives and other relevant materials have been gathered from diverse sources from the group of movement. To supplement the information that has been obtained from archival records the researcher used extensively

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<sup>31</sup> *The Indigenous Peoples' Movement: Theory, Policy, and Practice* by Dr. Duane Champagne Professor March 13, 2008

second-hand interviews with former BPLM members with both formal and informal discussions and in-depth interviews.

## 7.1 Study design

the study design was a qualitative case study

## 7.2. sampling technique

Purposive sampling technique was applied

## Target population

All BPLM top leaders, intelligence bodies, BPLM armed force commanders, lawyers and the Benishangul nation above 35 years old

## Exclusion criteria

Community under 35 years old.

## 8.2. Data collection tools and procedure

Discussion guide and interview guide has been translated into Arabic and moderated by the the principal investigator and experienced researchers. The principal investigator has moderated the discussion of the groups while one senior researcher was taking note during the discussion. Each discussion was tape-recorded and finally the conversation has been transcribed verbatim after each session and then analyzed.

Data collection method	Interviewed people	Their position
Key Informants	Informant Sabil Albekhit	Former vice president
	Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide	BPLM top commander
	Yousif Hamid Nasir	BPLM chairperson
	Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi	BPLM founder
	Commander Merkeni Ibrahim	BPLM commander
	Commander Madawi Abdurehim	BPLM commander
	Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed	BPLM founding member
	Atom Mustefa	BPLM founding deviant

	Commander Abdulbasit Hamed	BPLM commander
	Prosecutor K. K	BGRS G. At. prosecutor
	Prosecutor H.M	BGRS G. At prosecutor

Data collection method	Interviewed people	Their position
Focus group discussion	commander Atieb Ahmed	BPLM commander
	commander Khalil Mursal	BPLM commander and military intelligence
	commander Bushra Alkerib	BPLM commander and explorer of explosive mine
	commander Harun Almeda	BPLM commander
	Commander Zeruk Hamdan	BPLM commander
	commander Ismaeel Yousif	BPLM commander

### Data quality Control (Establishing rigor)

data quality has been controlled by designing a semi-structured questionnaire. Interviewers have been deployed after training. triangulation of interviewee and interviewer, interview site triangulation, source triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing has been conducted to assure the quality of the data.

### Data processing and analysis

Data has been transcribed in English and organized in narrative forms incongruent with the respondents' (emic) own words on the same day and analyzed by Narrative analysis.

### Operational definition

**Benishangul:** means are people who have an administrative structure in Assosa zone and same community who speaks the same language and have the same socio-cultural connection to this community elsewhere.

**Benishangul Gumuz:** means is the geographically demarcated territory and administrative structure of the regional state found west Ethiopia and in the border of east Sudan

**Founder:** is any member of the movement who gathered for the first Time to establish either Aljebeha Alwateniya or BPLM.

**Commander:** is any military member in BPLM having the rank and or title of giving military command for some troops under his command at any level.

**BPLM:** It means the first phase BPLM movement who struggled from 1988 to the transitional period of the EPRDF government.

**Martyrs:** it means those military members who are passed in the operation field during the struggle from 1988-1991.

### **Ethical clearance**

A legal letter of the clearance has been provided from Berta zonal national council. Confidentiality has been maintained and the interviewer has signed and allowed their personal identification to be documented. To maintain privacy in-depth interview has been conducted in a private room. It has been explained to the participants that they have the right not to participate in the study or discontinued at any time. Participants also have been informed as data used for research purpose only.

Dissemination and utilization of a result

The results of the study have been presented to all stakeholder members of the target community.

## The ambit of Benishangul's Land and People

This chapter presents the historical background of the Benishangul identity before modern Ethiopia and self-ruling struggle during contemporary Ethiopia. In order to comprehend the causes of the armed conflict from 1976-1991, as the first phase and the years passed by 2nd phase BPLM in guerilla fighting, it is vital to examine the origins of the political development within Benishangul starting from the imperial time and following the demise of Dergue regime rule, and the process through which the BPLM was struggled for free and identified Benishangul. Thus, the chapter tries to examine and provide an account of what happened, why it happened and the effects it had in the subsequent political pitch of Benishangul. Retrospectively to the political development in the period of emperors in Ethiopia and the war for self-rule in the time of modern Ethiopia. The chapter starts by presenting an overview of the various groups of Benishangul indigenous and non-indigenous population, the geography, religion, economy and ethnolinguistic composition, relevant for understanding ethnic and national mobilization for struggle.

Benishangul, a former part of fungi kingdom (memlekatu -alzerka 1300—1821) Arabic name the black's kingdom which was established their first capital city of fungi in Fasuquli on border 53 KM of toddy's Benishangul land in 1300 before the existence of recent modern Ethiopia, and then its capital shifted to Sinnar after 200 years because Sinnar was a trade center in 1405 by the lead of Amara Dinkish.<sup>32, 33</sup>

By now Benishangul is bordered by Gambela regional state in South direction, Sudan in the West, Oromiya regional state in the East, Amhara regional state in Northeasterly and Tigray national regional state <sup>34</sup> in the North direction as approved by Benishangul regional constitution Article( 2)1996 but nowadays even if the regional constitution showed and approves the border with Tigray, on the sketch Map of Benishangul Gumuz is not clear as indicated in the Map below.

<sup>32</sup> Okaloosa (2015-10-28). بني شنقول شعب المعرفة.

<sup>33</sup> M. lion Bender and Harold G. Marcus 1981 Edited, *People and culture of Ethio-Sudan borderland*, Michigan state university

<sup>34</sup> Proclamation No 1/1996 Proclamation of Constitution of the Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State



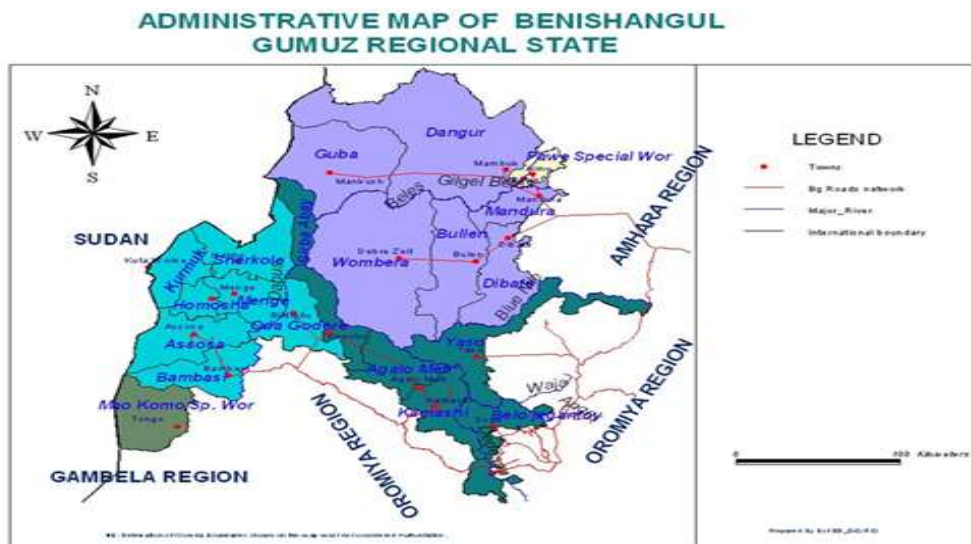


Figure 1 Benishangul Gumz Sketch map

The Regional state has a total surface area of 50,699 square kilometers now after assimilation happened on Benishangul land from all corners. For instance, Matema, Galabat, from the direction of Amhara region has been taken forcefully and Begi - Chagni was overtaken by the so-called referendum in recent 1991 and 2002 respectively, but this all territory historically was that of Benishangul autonomous free country under the command of shekh khojele and another local ruler of Benishangul.

*According to British public record office archive, F, O,1/37, January 5<sup>th</sup>,1900 asserted that Benishangul was a country but incorporated by Menelik II after 1900 especially Ogaden and Benishangul by the agreement between British official Parsons Adar and Menelik II in agreement protocol called Addis Ababa agreement of 1902. And the German traveler Arnest Marnu in his title "Reisen im Gebiete des Blauen und Weissen Nil" added that Benishangul was incorporated into Ethiopia in 1896. It also mostly used by Cerulli in his book as "no man's land i.e. places or land between two opposing frontiers."*<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Arnest Marnu 1896, "Reisen im Gebiete des Blauen und Weissen Nil"

## GOLD AND MINERAL CONCESSION

between

EMPEROR MENELEK II and GEORGE WILLIAM LANE

### TRANSLATION

The Seal of Emperor MENELEK II.

I, MENELEK II, King of Kings of Ethiopia, for me and for my heir, to Mr. George William Lane, and to the Englishmen in the city of London who are his company, I have given permission to (act according to) the wording of this letter.

(I) I have given permission to Mr. Lane to search for gold, silver, and anything else that can be got out of the earth in the whole of the Beni Schongul country, for four years, the said four years to begin from the time when he starts digging the earth. I am giving these four years to Mr. Lane and his men only, that they may search until the end of these four years; to no other person will any such permission be given in the Beni Schongul country; but the inhabitants of the country will not be stopped from extracting the gold, as they have done hitherto. In these four years, if gold, silver, or anything else that can be extracted from the earth is found by Mr. Lane's men, I have given to himself and his company my permission to work the said gold, silver, or anything else that can be extracted from the earth, for a period of fifty years.

(II) I have given permission to Mr. Lane and his company to bring all the materials, machinery, and steamships which are necessary for extracting gold, silver, or anything else which may be got out of the earth, and to lay railways, and put up telegraph wires, and make canals and roads in the Beni Schongul country. But the permission I am giving today does not annul the permission already given to other people.

(III) I have given permission that everything necessary for extracting gold, silver, or anything else that can be got out of the earth, i.e., machinery, gunpowder, dynamite, or anything else required for breaking up to rocks (is) to pass through Ethiopia into Beni Schongul without paying duty.

(IV) I have given permission to Mr. Lane, and the men of his company, to pass through my dominions, backwards and forwards, without let or hindrance.

(V) If the men who are in the service of Mr. Lane's company fight among themselves, the man who is appointed a magistrate by the company will settle (disputes) and punish (offenders); but in the case of murder, the Emperor will himself judge the case. In return for the concession hereby granted by the Emperor Menelek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia to Mr. Lane and his company, Mr. Lane

The region now is approximately the size of Slovakia and Costa Rica or slightly more than a shared landmass of the Netherlands, Taiwan and Kuwait.

The territory is inhabited by at least five linguistically defined native indigenous nationalities: Benishangul, Gumuz, Mao, Komo and Shinasha. But also, the non-indigenous groups for instance the Oromo, Amhara and Tigray also reside in Benishangul- Gumuz region. There is no up-to-date dependable demographic

data of the different ethnolinguistic groups, But from the Benishangul Gumuz regional state Wikipedia, Benishangul 25.15% Gumuz 20.59, Shinasha 4.58, Oromo 17.69 Amharic 22.46. So, Benishangul speaker's make-up the majority of the Benishangul Gumuz population. In terms of religion, 44.98 are Muslim, 33.3% are Orthodox, 13.53% are protestant and 7.09 practice traditional beliefs (the majority of Benishangul Gumuz community are Muslim). In terms of economy and geography, the Benishangul are predominantly Muslim and mostly sedentary agriculturalists dwelling in the rural part of the region.

### **The Benishangul community geography and Language Map**

Benishangul ethnic group is the populous and the front-line founder of Aljebeha wateniya and later BPLM within the region. The Benishangul ethnic in Ethiopia and Sudan, who are just separated by the political border of the two countries, they share common historical, social, cultural and religious backgrounds and are considered as one ethnic unit.<sup>36</sup> Benishangul nation including that of Sudan is divided in to around ninety-two (92) clans called 'FA'.<sup>37</sup> It is motivating to note that most of the clan names derived from surrounding mountains where their ancestors used to live.

For instance, the mountains Undu, Homosha, AKoldi and Tsore are used as clan names by adding the prefix "Fa-"; i.e. Faundus, Fahomosha, Fakoldi, Fatsore, fadhashi, fadul, fatsinje, fabeshir fadondor, fabogish, fahunhun, fadurse, and fakaroo etc... But the community are from the same ethnic group. Other clans known as Aracabia, Alahangia, Asurakab etc.....<sup>38</sup> Benishangulian are apparently of mixed Arab origin. The Benishangul people speak the Benishangul language as their mother tongue. It is a tonal language classified as a branch of the Nilo-Saharan linguistic group.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, Arabic, Oromifa and Amharic are spoken.

Benishangul people are the indigenous community in Ethiopia estimated to live in Ethiopia before the Christian calendar and it was part of the Funj kingdom since

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<sup>36</sup> Teffera, T. (2007) *bol negero of the Berta of West Ethiopia*

<sup>37</sup> Teffera, T. (2007) *bol negero of the Berta of West Ethiopia*

<sup>38</sup> M. lion Bender and Harold G. Marcus 1981 Edited, *People and culture of Ethio-Sudan borderland*, Michigan state university

<sup>39</sup> E. Cerulli 1947, *Journal of International African institute the three Berta dialects in western Ethiopia*

1300 and three hundred years before the establishment of Funj kingdom or approximately before 1,019 years ago living on Benishangul territory of today.<sup>40</sup>

This community are located in the western part of Ethiopia particularly in Assosa zone following the border of Sudan and also distributed within a different part of the regional zones especially in Kamashi Belojiganfoy, sedal woreda and in Metekel zone in Guba/ Mankush woreda and very few numbers in Wombera. But this community is not limited to this region only. they also found, in afar region awash 7 Sabure areas, in Oromia methera and awash area, standing with their language and full identity and culture but those who distributed in huge numbers in western welega are deprived of their full identity and the majority speak Oromifa and acculturated by Oromo. And also, majority of this ethnic unit are found in the Blue Nile and Sinnar states of Sudan country having the different name of the nation especially majority in Sudan are registered as fungi/Hamaj tribe and some of them called as Watawit, Rutana, Benishangul and other naming but the culture, language, religion, custom, and social connection are the same with that of the nation in Ethiopia.<sup>41</sup>

### **Summary**

Benishangul community are the borderline community cosmologically are from both country of Ethiopia and Sudan, also are of the populous ethnic group in the region which are the earlier community for 300 years before the establishment of Funj kingdom of fasaqalu in 1300. on the recent territory and certainly they were on the land of Ethio-Sudan from Birbir up to Sinnar state three hundred years ago before memelakatu-azerka (1300) i.e. since 10<sup>th</sup>c and before testers and assimilation of Benishangul land and country. It was a free zone, autonomous and self-ruling country after fall down of Funj

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<sup>40</sup> J. W. Robertson in 1934.<sup>30</sup> *The Funj chiefs of Fazughli(fasaqalu) and Keili*

<sup>41</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

## Early History of Benishangul Sheikhdoms administration and politics (1880's)

Before discussing the early history of Benishangul it is critical to explain the origin of the ethnic /tribe and different names given to these communities at different times by different testers. Benishangul community in western Ethiopia was the indigenous community on today's Benishangul Gumuz of Ethiopia since 1300 as a tributary of Funj kingdom.

*"According to French surgeon J. C. Poncet, who visited Sennar in 1699: "The Funj Sultanate of Sennar, traditionally known in Sudan as the Blue Sultanate (Arabic: السلطنة الزرقاء). was a sultanate in what is now Sudan, northwestern Eritrea and western Ethiopia, named after the Funj ethnic group of its dynasty after its capital, which ruled a substantial area of northeast Africa between 1504 and 1821." Ruled by Amara Dunqas (Amara Dinkish and over by Badi VII who mostly known by Benishangul community as Agure-Bade"*

Another chief evidencing hypothesis about the origin of Funj that supports the long existence of Benishangul community on today's land and the way to their original name,

*"Funj Origins by P. M. Holt Cambridge University Press Journal of African History. 4, No. 1 (1963), pp. 39-55-Against the hypothesis of a homeland on the upper Blue Nile one must set some traditions reported by J. W. Robertson in 1934.<sup>30</sup> The Funj chiefs of Fazughli(fasaqalu) and Keili in his time asserted that their ancestors came thither from Sennar at an uncertain period. Robertson believes that 'They undoubtedly have been in this part of the world for two or three hundred years, still later date before the establishment of Funj control over most of the territory now known as Dar al-Funj, i.e. the country to the west of the upper Blue Nile above al-Rusayris. Here the paramount chief (the Shaykh of Gule) was a descendant, of the Hamaj regents".*



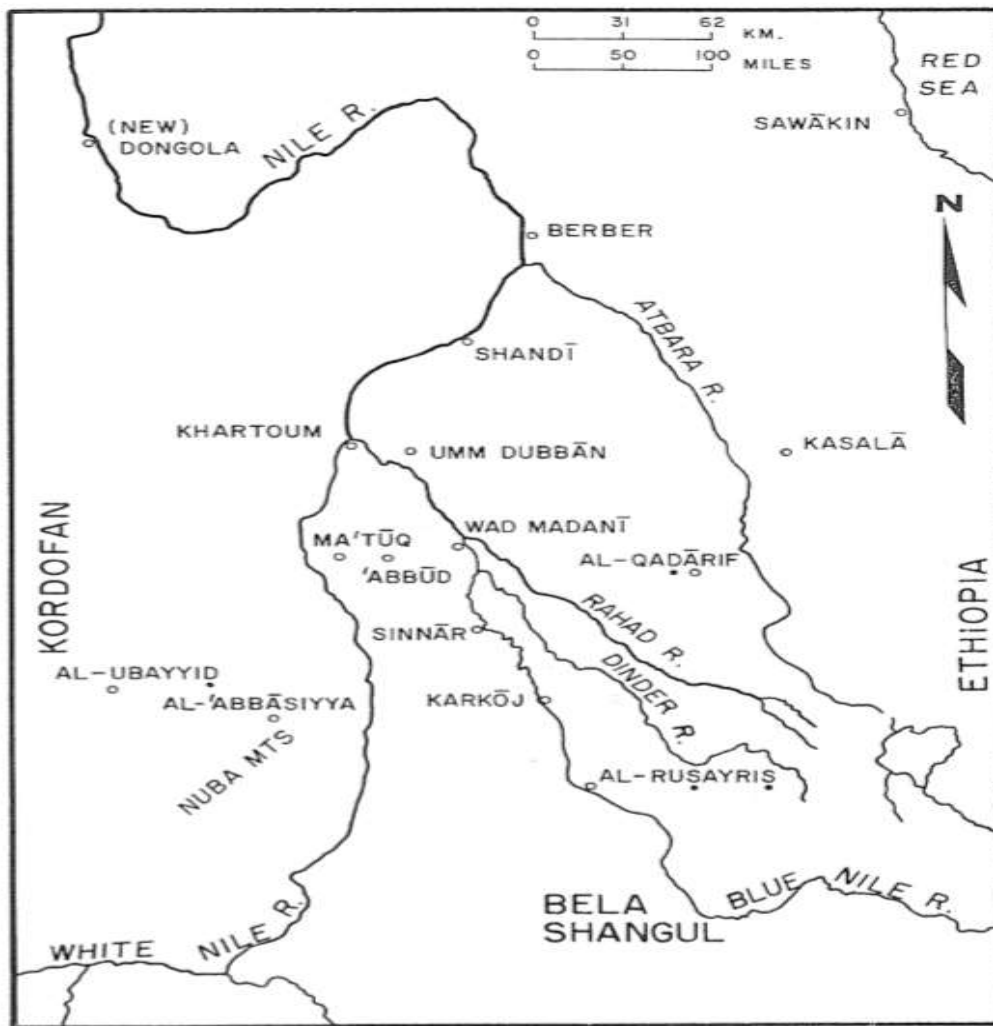


Figure 3: The Nilotic Sudan in the Nineteenth Century

Figure 1 Sketch map of Nilotic Sudan

**Source:** - John Hunwick, Robert Laneway, *Holy men of the Blue Nile the making an Arab Islamic community in the Nilotic Sudan (1500—1850)*.

Most recently some scholars like M. Lionel Bender and Harold in their title of the culture of Ethio-Sudan borderlands, have stated the county of Benishangul as the Berta <sup>42</sup>country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as shown in Berta country sketch map below<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> M. lion Bender and Harold G. Marcus 1981 Edited, *People and culture of Ethio-Sudan borderland*, Michigan state university

<sup>43</sup> E. Cerulli 1947, *Journal of International African institute the three Berta dialects in western Ethiopia*

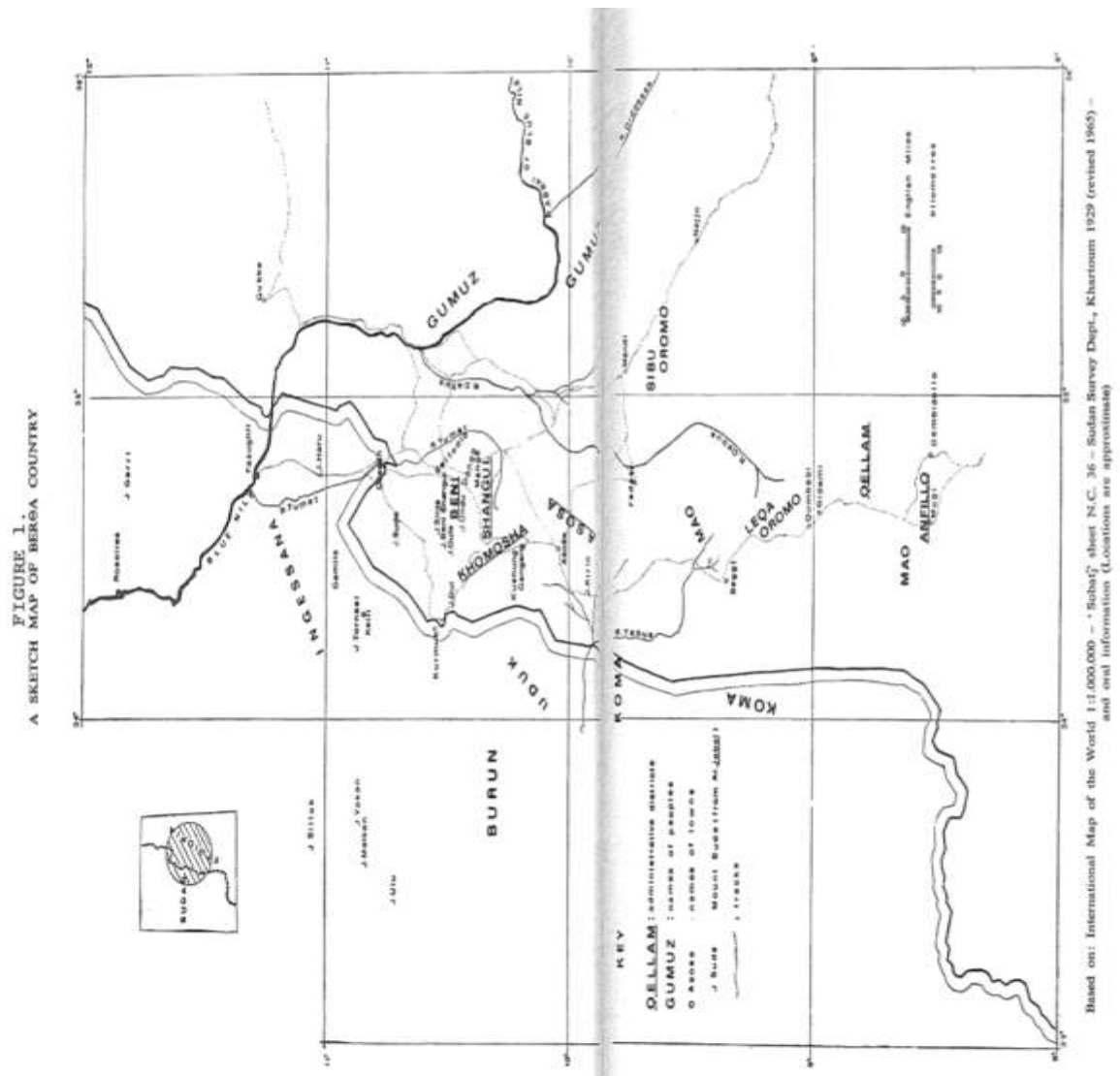


Figure 2 Sketch map of Berta country

In 1947 the journal of African institute by E, Cerulli on his travel in the area in 1928 to conduct the survey on the three Berta dialects in Western Ethiopia, he tried to down the sketch map of Berta by separating Berta as a geographic unit and Benishangul in different local plots but in the same country as shown in sketch map below

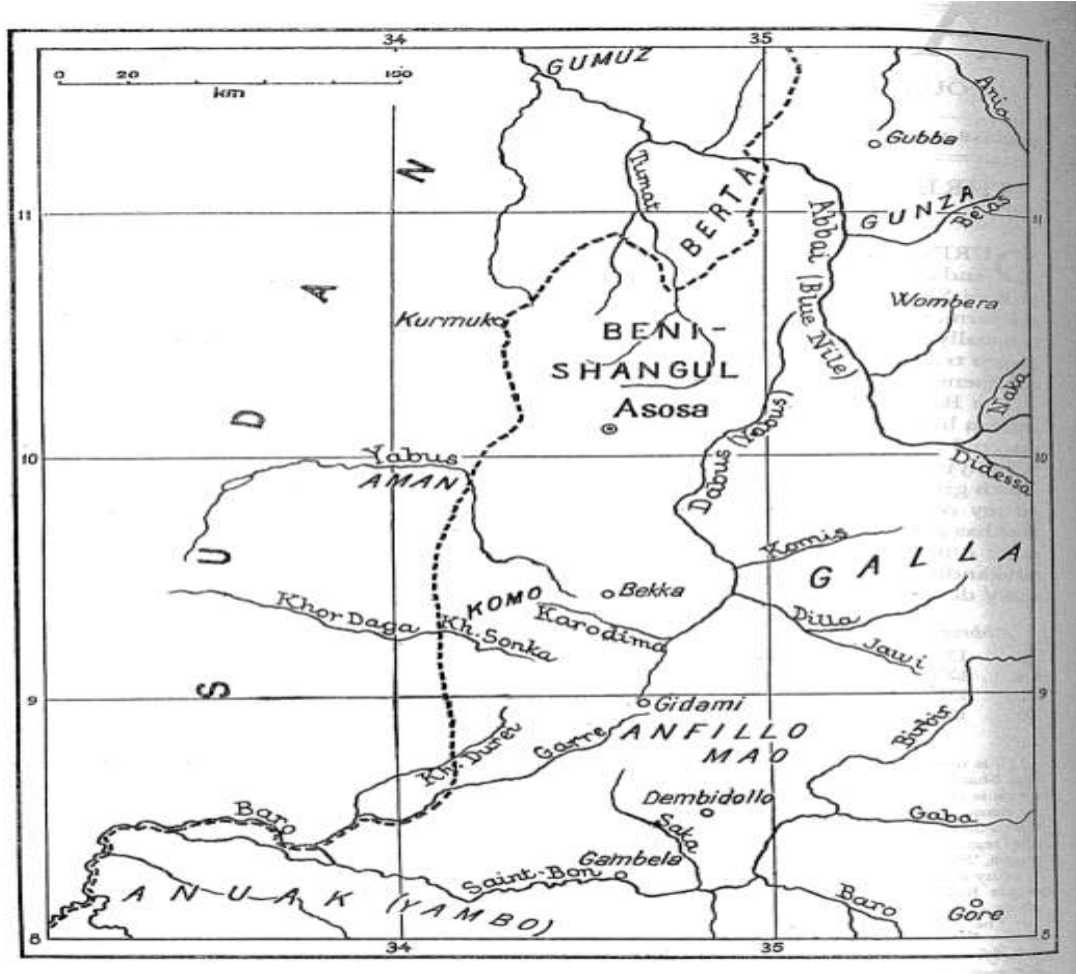


Figure 3 sketch map of Benishangul country

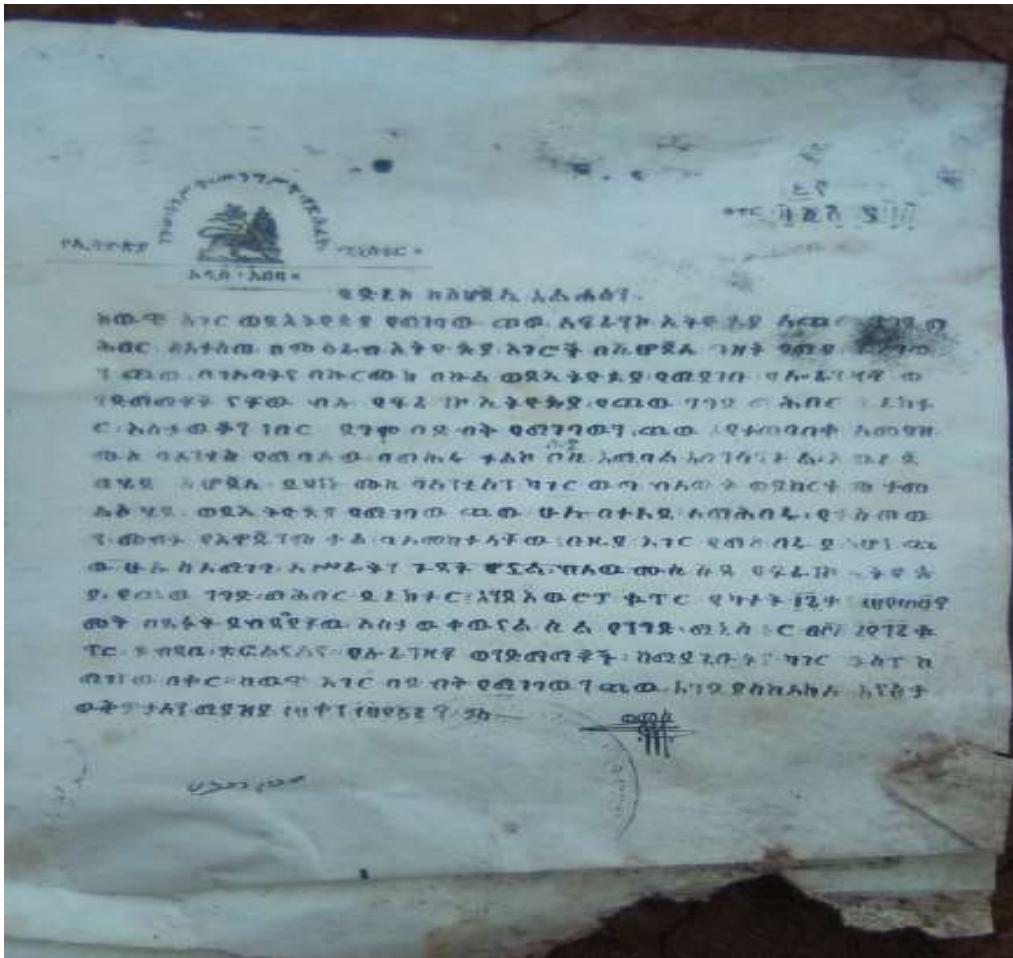
During the empire era in Ethiopia the territory that constitute Benishangul today was contested by different powers after disruption of the fungi kingdom and the declaration of Benishangul as a free country <sup>44</sup>having its capital city in a place called Famaka in today's Blue Nile state of Sudan and then to Homosha.<sup>45</sup> During the time Benishangul acted as an autonomous country bordering Eritrea through Matema-Galabat, <sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Letter of Menelik for concession on Gold and mineral with British William Jorge on Benishangul country on record F, O, 1/37, January 5th, 1900 Addis Ababa

<sup>45</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>46</sup> Letter on December 1928 and June 1880 from Menelik to shekh Khojele and on Feb 4, 1921 from Hylesilasie to Shekh Khojele





Oromia through Birbir, Gidami, and Amfilo (see figure- 4) Amhara at some part of Gojem, Sudan through toady's Blue Nile state and through Gambela. For the witness in recent time there is still the archeological witness in the Ura (Abenkoro) of Sudan where Almalka Amna used to live during her sovereignty. Also, in Amfilo near Gidami in Oromia and today's Bengua (formerly Taiba) there is a deep grave excavated for bordering between Jote the ruler of Dembidolo and shekh khojele, and also eucalyptus tree where khojele used to live respectively.<sup>47</sup>

During this time Benishangul was having local administration and decentralized local rulers like today's regional states in Ethiopia but having their own military.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>48</sup> Philosophie (Dr. phil.) vorgelegt der Fakultät der Geisteswissenschaften (2016). From "Subject to Citizen"? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship: The Case of the Mao and Komo of Western Ethiopia Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der der Universität Hamburg von Alexander Meckelburg

For instance, there were local rulers' Mohamud Himedi and then wad Mohamud ("Ammed"-Mohammed) and his brother Musa of Homosha -Dull, Abdurrahman tore-alguri of Menge, shekh khojele of Assosa and Aba-Moti (Mohammed Hassen Anur) of Bambashi, wadel-amin (Mohammed ala' min Abdelhadi) of Gagukolo, shekh Alnazir of Jebel Tsinje and Mohamed Ahmed of Khanajia.<sup>49</sup> All-local leaders have their own administration, governing structure, communication and plane of working for common goods in common. Then following the border of Sudan, in 1880's the so-called Almahadia asudania Arabic name (mahadist Sudan) by the lead of their leader Mohammed Almahadi entered to the land of Benishangul having the aim of expansion of Islamic abidance and has introduced the Islamic sharia justice and the court to the community of Benishangul.<sup>50</sup> for instance, Almalka Amna (king Amna) the wife of the shekh khojele who took the lead during the imprisonment of shekh khojele has practiced the sharia law during the time on the criminal acts. This also showed how the Benishangul community and Islamic religion have gave attention to the women empowerment during the ancient political arena.<sup>51</sup> The Benishangul autonomous land economy depended on the majority of gold mining and semi agricultural which made the country act as a port for neighboring countries.

After the hospitable agreement of Almalka Amna and autonomous land of Benishangul with the Mahdist Sudan, following the death of Mohammed Almahadi his khalif(successor) Abdullahi attaihi of Sudan took over the lead of Mahdist Sudan force, tried to control the land of Benishangul to pillage the natural resource and to endure in the slave trade in late 1880's.<sup>52</sup>

Abdullahi attaihi (Khalifa) by his military leader who ruled over Asa'id commander Kahlil has faced a great confrontation from the Benishangul local rulers especially

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<sup>49</sup> Alessandro Triulzi 1975, *Trade, Islam, and the Mahdia in Northwestern Wallaggā, Ethiopia*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University

<sup>50</sup> Alessandro Triulzi 1981, *salt, gold and legitimacy prelude to the history of no man's land Bela-Shangul welega Ethiopia*, Napoli: institute university Orientale

<sup>51</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>52</sup> Philosophie (Dr. phil.) vorgelegt der Fakultät der Geisteswissenschaften (2016). From "Subject to Citizen"? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship: The Case of the Mao and Komo of Western Ethiopia Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der der Universität Hamburg von Alexander Meckelburg

as Triulzi stated in his book written in 1975, “Khalil’s rule over the al-Sa’id continued to be harsh and exacting. The imprisonment of the Aqoldi ruler, supported by Omdurman, was followed by even stronger measures.

*The two Bela Shangul rulers who had most opposed Khalil’s misrule, Mahmud of Khomosha and ‘Abd ar-Rahman of Bela Shangul proper, now reacted sharply to the invading army”* then the two months of 1890 incessant battle continued between Mahdist military commander abdu-alresul and Angeri the military leader of Bela-Shangul ruler, Mohamud of Khomosha and Abdurrahman of Bela-Shangul continued the battle and the local ruler defeated the Abdu-alrasul military but eventually the other military belt of Mahdist who was in Galabat by the lead of al-Zakie has come to support Abdu-alrasul in Bela-Shangul and reached the capital Qebesh of Abdurrahman in January 1890, that resulted the capitulation of Mohamud of Khomosha to prison in Albuqa’ of Sudan where he died and fled of Abdurrahman of Bela-Shangul to Neighboring Oromiya for months but Khojele desisted from involvement.

But following the fled of Abdu-Rahman to Oromiya, Bela-Shangul troops, under leader Angarri, (in some book captain Angarri) with estimated 10,000 soldiers according to an intelligence report, endured behind carrying on a long-drawn-out ‘guerrilla warfare against the Dervishes and capturing from them a large number of heavy armaments. The resistance was so great that in June 1890 the Mahdist commander Abd ar-Rasul received instructions from the Khalifa to retire north, which he did. When ‘Abd ar-Rahman returned to Bela Shangul he found his country atrophied because of looting, but free. This campaign of 1889-90 in Bela Shangul, marked the end of effective Mahdist over-rule in the northwestern corner of Ethiopia.

Although several orders and offers of peace were issued to Abd ar-Rahman to appear in Omdurman in the following years, the Bela Shangul ruler inflexibly refused them, and from 1890 headlong he accepted no orders from the Khalifa and will not allow any stranger to enter his country. Bela Shangul proper and Khomosha had remained the core of resistance to Mahdist control over the region. Internal rivalries and family feuds further disrupted the region in proposals for

supremacy in the power vacuum inevitably created by the Mahdist departure.

<sup>53</sup>The region returned to be the no man's land it had been so many times in the past. This did not last long however 'Abd ar-Rahman's rebellious attitude, and the inaccessibility of his country to Mahdist control, reportedly made the Khalifa yield Bela Shangul to Emperor Menelik in a fit of resentment. It appears in reality that the Khalifa only authorized Menelik to fight the Bela Shangul ruler, 'Abd ar-Rahman Khojali, because he was beyond his [the Khalifa's] control. and that such authorization merely concerned some of the Beni- Shangul mountains.

Khalifa continued and he sent a mission via his missionary called Yousif to the Menelik of Showa to get help from Menelik of Shawa and immediately Menelik was accepted the mission of Khalifa for the help and sent his troops by the lead of Ras Kekkonen the father of Hylesilasie for the incursion of local rulers of Benishangul and finally, the troops of Menelik was camped in the place called Mendi and sent a letter for Benishangul local ruler either to submit or to be invaded by the troops of Menelik.<sup>54</sup>

But the local rulers were so strong to be defeated and was confronted drastically and defeated the Menelik's troops in a place called "Koko" now known as Yabus of Bambashi. Finally, the Menelik used the political system of divide and rule to make the Benishangul self-ruling to be led by shekh khojele who remained silent toward Khalifa by abolishing the rest local ruler and Menelik weakened the power of Benishangul local rulers by an attack from two sides using internal disintegration between local rulers as an opportunity for their demise. Thus, the two sides agreed to make Benishangul country as one self-ruling part of Ethiopia under Menelik's ruling system but by the authorization of shekh khojele. After Benishangul become under Menelik manipulation, shekh khojele was really very strong toward Menelik because he was the only ruler in Ethiopia with a strong army in Benishangul and in Addis Ababa keeping his palace in Addis like that of Menelik. Shekh Khojele has got the upper hand after demises and weakening of rulers of Belashangul and Khomosha.

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<sup>53</sup> Alessandro Triulzi 1975, *Trade, Islam, and the Mahdia in Northwestern Wallaggā, Ethiopia*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University

<sup>54</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

He was also the personality who refused to accept the name that given as “Dejazimach” “saying I have respected designation for the honor of my community in Benishangul” which is “shekh” and finally continued as shekh khojele. due to his challenge to Menelik, the autocratic and Christian ruler of Menelik arrested and confined shekh khojele for nine years to the jail called “Alem Beka”<sup>55</sup> Amharic means no more life, and the local ruler of Menge Abdurrahman tor-alguri was displaced to Famaka in Sudan which was taken by Great Britain during their colony to Sudan until the 1950s. But still, through the agreement of Khalifa and the colonial leaders of Great Britain, Abdurrahman tor-alguri also brought back to Ethiopia and has got the same destiny of shekh khojele in jail which finalized by torture and by the introduction of non-Benishangulian and non-native to the land of Benishangul. After the death of shekh khojele the lead was given to his son Ashafi khojele. Because of the political tension between Ashafi khojele who took the lead after the death of his father shekh khojele and his brothers were a turning point for the introduction of highlanders non Benishangul and non-native into the Benishangul self-ruling governmental system. It was the time that the invasion to Benishangul people Become too harsh which carried the victory over Benishangul people by Menelik and took a lot of war booties which are now found in Mathahara, Awash, Belojiganfoy, Afar and a small number in Jimma and Dessie. The aim of incursion and introduction of non-native to Benishangul land was to pillage the gold and natural resource of Benishangul because they understood as Benishangul is rich in natural resource after the Ethiopia national Bank <sup>56</sup>and international economic system of Ethiopia established by purely Benishangul gold of hundreds of tones that shekh khojele provided as a gift as well as tax twice a year to Menelik. Even though the Ethiopian economic base was from Benishangul, the people of Benishangul faced great discrimination and marginalization. They have never got logical attention that remotely corresponds to their importance and

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<sup>55</sup> Alessandro Triulzi 1975, *Trade, Islam, and the Mahdia in Northwestern Wallaggā, Ethiopia*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University

<sup>56</sup> VLC media file (.VOB) Saturday, January 1, 2005, 5:00:00 AM History of Berta, Addis Ababa university.

<sup>57</sup>Letter on December 1928 and June 1880 from Menelik to shekh Khojele and on Feb 4, 1921 from Hylesilasie to Shekh Khojele

contribution they devoted to the establishment of the Ethiopian national Bank and economy.

After the fall of Menelik, emperor Hylesilasie took over the lead of the country but still the community of Benishangul was violently isolated because of their religion, culture and belief and even dressing that makes them unique from Ethiopian and still different. This unique culture of Benishangul made them more discriminated against and marginalized communities in Ethiopia during the Hylesilasie regime.

58, 59, 60

There was no infrastructure, no social service, and politically motivated torture and imprisonment that forced the newly emerged second-generation local rulers under Hylesilasie government in Assosa such as Dejas Mustafa, Ashafi khojele and Hamdan Abshok of Guba and the great revolt against taxpaying of Bashir was a second uprising and opposition against the empire. At the time the local rulers were asking referendum and self-determination.<sup>61</sup> As a result of the opposition the whole Kebele chairpersons were imprisoned, frontline activists were killed, the indigenous community of Benishangul displaced from places bordering Sudan like Shirkole, Gizan, Bashir Etc...

Following the torture, humiliation and savaging happened on the Benishangul community, the great revolt of Bashir against tax paying started, distributed and expanded throughout Benishangul against emperor Hylesilasie. Indeed, the revolt against tax has played a tremendous role in the startup of second resistance and continuity of legacy of local rulers that have confronted against Menelik before. This revolt also was a cause for confinement and quietus of revolt group of Bashir led by Asheh Ibrahim of Bashir who was in atrocious imprisonment and passed in the jail because of their revolt but not only this myriad of innocents also slaughtered.<sup>62</sup>

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58 Teffera, T. (2007) *bol negero of the Berta of West Ethiopia*

59 Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

60 قافة النيل عند قبيلة البرتا (بنى شنقول): إمكانيات التعاون والتنمية بين مصر والسودا مؤتمر المياوم الطاقة-امكانات التكامل والتنمية

61 Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

62 Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

## Role of Benishangul community in Ethiopian administration and politics

Unlike other communities in Ethiopia, the Benishangul community has had no intellectual and illiteracy has played a fundamental role in hindering this community to write down what historically happened in their regions and what they contributed as part of Ethiopia. Due to the marginalization and savaging of the community the great contribution to the country as a nation remained enclosed. In Ethiopian journals, published and unpublished papers no sufficient and or biased information that deals with the Benishangul community because of illiteracy, economy and marginalization stranded Benishangul nation. Besides this all violation and illiteracy, the Benishangul community has played an immeasurable vibrant role in defending and working hardily for their homeland of recent Ethiopia.

During the ancient time of emperor Menelik especially at the time of war of Abdullahi attaiishi (Khalifa) who took over the lead of Almahadi asudania (Mahdist Sudan) after the death of Mohamed Almahadi who controlled Matema and Galabat in 9 March 1889, the ruler of Benishangul Mohamud and Abdurahman has played a tremendous role in fighting against Abdullahi attaiishi (Khalifa) who attempted to occupy Benishangul for pillaging its natural resource. and the famous local fighters from Homosha such as Anur Saleh, Umar Saleh, Etman (Uthman) Saleh, Ali Abdulkarim and Khalifa Sead, etc... were killed by Mahdist Sudan at the battle of Birbir when they fled to restore struggle against Khalifa.

The second great contribution was the direct participation of Benishangul formal military in the battle of Adwa in 1935-1936 having Military group of 350 troops trained by the British military on Benishangul land which was having a unique name as “عرفوا باسم باندافونج” (Banda Funj ) in addition shekh khojele used to have large built a strong formal military on Benishangul land as well as in Addis Ababa who was in charge of keeping his sub-city and palace in today's Gulele (shagole) in Addis Ababa who was also participated in Adwa battle, but scholars did not

come through.<sup>63</sup> Not only this the Ethiopian national Bank<sup>64,65</sup> and Ethiopian economy have been established purely by the Benishangul gold. Also, in big picture, at the time of struggle of the peasant for the land for tiller the only Benishangul brainpower was Yousif Hamid Nassir in the ruling system of Hylesilasie. Even if he was of the only representative of Benishangul, he played a tremendous role in abolishing the emperor because of the atrocity toward Ethiopian people as a whole and Benishangul community in particular. Finally, he has got the recognition from new Dergue regime with his co-worker Debissa Herero of Borana and Abiye zegeye of Wolo amid 250 delegates of the emperor as 'Lewut hawaria'<sup>66</sup> means pioneers of the revolution to the dergue due to their treasured struggle to the fall of the emperor and then they included in the dergue parliament. So, Benishangul played its fruit full role via his hero revolutionary Yousif Hamid and to some extent by Atieb Ahmed defa'llah in the fall to the Christian ruler of the Hylesilasie regime. And Benishangul community was the only community that engaged in hospitality, building a shelter and fed the Amaras who displaced from Wolo and different parts of Ethiopia living with them in solidarity at the time of famine in the 1970's. The debate behind the name Berta, Benishangul, Tornasi, and Hamaj-Funj

The name Berta and Benishangul and the debate behind the name of Berta and Benishangul in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are very crucial for the chapter parts of this book. Even if this community was named by different testers by different naming, the name Berta as Bender stated in his book entitled culture of Ethio-Sudan borderlands P.184, the name Berta first appeared in Ethiopia in the seventeenth century as a tributary of Funj.<sup>67</sup> Bender also tried to assert that Bertha of Jebel

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<sup>63</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>64</sup> Letter on December 1928 and June 1880 from Menelik to shekh Khojele and on Feb 4, 1921 from Hylesilasie to Shekh Khojele

<sup>65</sup> VLC media file (.VOB) Saturday, January 1, 2005, 5:00:00 AM History of Berta, Addis Ababa university.

<sup>66</sup> Informant Yousif Hamid Nasir, Wednesday, January 18, 2019, 3:02:08 AM Australia

<sup>67</sup> M. lion Bender and Harold G. Marcus 1981 Edited, People and culture of Ethio-Sudan borderland, Michigan state university



Sude(shudu) was the first to come from Jebel Gari of Sennar because of conflict between funj-hamaj by the lead of their great father Qethabua which latterly succeeded by his son Barthu as a leader of Bartha which he concluded as the name of the people derived from their leader Berthu-abune.

But Bender and his crew failed to proclaim what was the name of the people under Barthu before Birth of Barthu and before he becomes the leader and also from which group that mother Indili and Qethabua born? and if Bartha people come in a different times in different numbers as Bender stated, to which class these societies was cosmological? he also failed to understand either the Bartha was a clan or the tribe because he stated that the Bartha migrated to Sude because of conflict between Funj-Hamaj, what was their relation to Funj and Hamaj. Finally, Bender did not come through investigation to what Hamaj, Bartha and Funj have in common for example he assured that the existence of Fasuqli dynasty and Hamaj in Fasuqli was a paramount for penetration of Funj to Benishangul and good thing he tried to explain the word Fasuqli means is fasaqalu” but he did not come through to check the language similarity of Hamaj, Funj, and the so-called Bartha. since the name Hamaj is pejorative word Arab used to undermine the people of that area, and fasaqalu naming of Hamaj and the words explained in the so-called Bartha are certainly of same cosmology and same language.

Also, there is a shred of evidence that as explained in the Map of Nilotic Sudan in 19<sup>th</sup>c, “John Hunwick, Robert Laneway, Holy men of the Blue Nile the making an Arab Islamic community in the Nilotic Sudan (1500—1850) “ showed that starting from 1500 there was another geographical name called Bela shengul<sup>68</sup> but Bender stated that the name Bela-shengul came after Bartha of Sude, Because the king of Sude Berthu-abune has been buried in Bela shengul after they come from Sude and the name Bertha was given to the people in 17<sup>th</sup>c in Ethiopia but what was their name in Sudan before the birth of Barthu which is controversies with the existence of name Bela-shengul since 15<sup>th</sup>c.

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<sup>68</sup> Gerrit J. Dimmendaal 1955. *Areal contact in Nilo-Saharan*, Cambridge University Press

Another writer E. Cerulli who tried to separate Berta as specific small geographical location bordering Benishangul, stated firmly in his book, *“Benishangul, as I have stated elsewhere, speak Berta, they are in fact the eastern branch of Sudan people called by us Berta”* he tried to show the name Berta as called by them. Bender also tried to illustrate the similarity between Hamaj of jebel Gule and the Tornasi cluster of Bartha, but he failed to explain what the Tornasi cluster of Berta, their similarity and odd from the Bartha of Barthu-abune. Tornasi is not the name of the clan or ethnic but it is the name of a mountain in the eastern part (Kelli) to Blue Nile state capital of Damazine. Watawit also mentioned as an alternative name for these people but as von Alexander Meckelburg in 2016 on his study on “From “Subject to Citizen”? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship:<sup>69</sup> The Case of the Mao and Komo of Western Ethiopia, “Watawit” is a name given to some part of people who called Berta in Benishangul and as Funj in Sudan, because they enter -married with Arab. These people named Watawit literary are mostly dominant as “Bashara, Fabeshir and or Fatsinje” but they are Part of either Barta in Ethiopia or Funj in Sudan.

Another great author who strongly tried to conclude about the origin of Berta and the name Berta was Alexandro Triulzi. Alexandro Triulzi no doubt he agrees with the idea of M. Lion Bender which I criticized above, but the good thing he tried to explain in his book entitled as salt , gold and legitimacy prelude to the no man’s land of Benishangul P,23, that “it is difficult to affirm or ascertain the truth of Berta claim as all Bertha is from one father Barthu and one mother Indili” and he draws a conclusion as his book is **“tentative prelude”**. He also tried to separate Hamaj as Funj mixed black Muslims, but he also explained on the same book P,76, as name Hamaj are “people termed as Hamaj because they have had no clear genealogy (nisba) and were not educated”. But he failed to identify what was the name of these groups before the pejorative name of Hamaj naming of an Arab and

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<sup>69</sup> Philosophie (Dr. phil.) vorgelegt der Fakultät der Geisteswissenschaften (2016). From “Subject to Citizen”? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship: The Case of the Mao and Komo of Western Ethiopia Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der der Universität Hamburg von Alexander Meckelburg.

the relation of this group to Berta in relation to language and socio-cultural relationship. He also explained Hamaj in this book P,77 as “Hamaj are undistinguishable one, people from north nominally Muslim or self-declared Funj.” But Jebalawin in his book P,78 asserted and linked the ideological and political tool as Dar Alberta was transformed to Dar Alfunj” because Alexandro Triulzi failed to express well the transitional periods before the existence of the so-called Berta on this land of Dar-Alberta. Because it seems that these lands were of the different groups who migrated from today’s Sudan at different times from different cosmology. He also explained the existence of other racial mixed Jebalawin, Watawit and Hamaj in Berta country who come in numerous groups after Berta and intermarried with Berta, but he failed to explain the numerical representation of each group because all were certainly not native at the time, maybe the difference was the time period of immigration to no man’s land of Benishangul. Alexandro Triulzi and Bender drown the conclusion of name Berta as name derived from their great leader Barthu-abune, which I questioned as what was the name of group under Qibua before the birth of his son Barthu, but Alexandro Triulzi put controversies on P,186 on this book as Bertha is the name called by Arab for slave(a’bid) and on page 189 the Berta themselves call Mao as “Umm-Dudu” means the slave of the leaf. So, the different meaning Umma, Bertha and Abid were belongs to who is doubtful. Because of the “ABID” is the Arabic word for Slave and “UMMA” is the name for slave in Barta, how Berta could be the meaning of slave and how can Berta name themselves as Berta (slave) since the name Bertha is concluded as Berta word. And also, if it was the name given to this group by Arab as Bertha was because of enslavement, is it was the only group of people who enslaved in the world? or if it was because of their dark color is it was the only people dark-colored in the world? So, Alexandro Triulzi’s book failed to hypothesize and to drown inference on such a question. Finally, no social group or ethnic group from al enslaved and colonized world named as **slaves** or any connotation in the world because of their enslavement or their color.

## Summary

Benishangul country historically is known to be from Sinnar to Birbir, Amfilo-to Galabat to border of Eritrea (see figure 3 and 4) but due to lack of intellectual in the region, and Biased history which politically influenced, the shared landmass of the region was assimilated by the expansionists from all corner and still under the dread of even demise of the Benishangul named land because of different interest on the region. And Benishangul community has played a tremendous role in both contemporary as well as classical Ethiopia even if Some scholars deny the truth.

In this study neither Benishangul, Bartha, Tornasi and Watawit was the name of the ethnic group. Berta, Tornasi and Watawit seemed to be the name of clan within funj-hamaj but Hamaj also is pejorative word toward some part of Funj. Benishangul is a territory where Tornasi, Funj, Bartha, Watawit and few Hamaj of Fasaqalu and of jebel Gule used to live. Linguistically, culturally, religion, traditionally all above mentioned groups are associated but no whole name given to these communities neither in Sudan nor in Ethiopia.

Funj naming of these people was known formerly in the last 300 years before Memelakatu-azerka of 1300, and *According to French surgeon J. C. Poncet*, who visited Sennar in 1699 asserted in his book Funj was the name of Ethnic group. Hamaj was the pejorative name given to some group in Funj when Arab come to hegemonize the king after 1504 and the territorial name Benishangul was Immediately named in 1500 (see figure -2) and name Bartha appeared for first time in Ethiopia in 17<sup>th</sup>c but no defined time for so-called Tornasi, Watawit and Jebalawin

So, the name of this community was better if named as Benishangul Funj because the world-wide known name for the ethnic is Funj and the territory where they live in Ethiopia is Benishangul So, (Benishangul Funj) will be an appropriate name for this community.

## Benishangul marginalization and Emergence of the Benishangul nationalism front (Aljebaha wateniya)1976

This chapter discovers the determinative period of the Benishangul nationalism front BNF (Arabic: -Alhjebeha- wateniya) and later BPLM and the beginning of the Benishangul armed struggle for self-rule and equality. It presents an analysis of the process through which the Benishangul nationalism front BNF (Alhjebeha-wateniya) and later BPLM was formed and inspects the role that major groups played role in beginning the war for self-rule and equality. Moreover, it presents a brief history of the pioneers in initiating the concept of the struggle of the armed force, and examines the reasons for this uprising, and also demonstrates how the insurgence grew in number and action and eventually, into a serious concern for the Ethiopian government. Finally, the major military engagements and operations carried out during the period and the martyrs under discussion are dealt with in this chapter.

Benishangul nationalism front BNF (Aljebaha- wateniya) 1976 and later BPLM. As discussed in the previous chapters, the increasing Ethiopian erosion of Benishangul self-administration, self-rule and marginalization of Benishangul community since the reign of Menelik in 1880's onwards successive rulers, was producing objections<sup>70,71,72</sup> and dissatisfaction among the general population. Being frustrated with the system many Benishangulian formed the secret organizations in all outlets especially Gondel was the place where they could concur to discuss 'what to do' concerning the Benishangul issue.

As it became quite difficult to organize and agitate inside Ethiopia, the task of organizing a movement to promote the Benishangulian case fell on the displacement to political asylum abroad. As a result, a new strain of Benishangul community created the secretive (Aljebaha -wateniya in BNF) Arabic means Benishangul nationalism front in Sudan on the beginning of 1976 which was created next to TPLF by one year and 16 years to ELF based on the concept and agenda that has been discussed secretly in Gondel of Assosa. The founders were

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<sup>70</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>71</sup> Informant Yousif Hamid Nasir, Wednesday, January 18, 2019, 3:02:08 AM Australia

<sup>72</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

a motivated youngster of Benishangul. They took the initiative of organizing political activities, aimed at terminating Ethiopian Dergue decree through armed force. But the former leaders of Aljebeha wateniya the later BPLM leaders were highly influenced by the Communist Party of Sudan not to have a formal movement. To ensure the security of the people who were involved in the activities of the movement, they started to be deployed into different tasks having the aim and objective of Benishangulism.<sup>73, 74, 75, 76, 77</sup>

### **Key Forces and Their Role in the Formation of Benishangul nationalism front BNF (Aljebeha -wateniya) and later BPLM**

There were six groups that played an important role at the initial stage of the armed struggle for self-rule and identity which latterly spearheaded by the BPLM. These groups were found among Benishangul youth who was facing atrocity in Ethiopia especially those who were led by Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Mohamed Yasin, Abdu Mohamed Ali, Yakub Abdulrahim, Adam Alhassan and the rest of their colleague those used to discuss on the issue in a place called Gondel.<sup>78</sup>

The second group was those who were in the ruling system of the dergue which was led by Khidir Ahmed zide and Yousif Hamid Nasir and their hero followers. The third group was the Benishangul community who was displaced from the atrocity of Ethiopian rulers which include Abdulrahim Yasin, Ustaz Jafer Zeruk, Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj, Bruza Ahmed, Ustaz Bushra, Hamedenil alfaki and latterly Atom Mustafa and their fellows.<sup>79</sup>

The fourth group was a member of the Benishangul community who was in the Sudan armed force. The fifth group was the critical mass behind the member of political elites which is the hero civilian community of Benishangul. The six groupss with the insubstantial role was Shanbel Hamis Bela, Abdin Ousman and al-mahadi Abdurehim who played their role at late to the end of dergue regime contributing

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<sup>73</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>74</sup> Informant Yousif Hamid Nasir, Wednesday, January 18, 2019, 3:02:08 AM Australia

<sup>75</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>76</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>77</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa

<sup>78</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>79</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

their armed force of “Hizbawi qumta” means the armed militia of indigenous Benishangul youths who were at the side of dergue with the lead of three above mentioned ELP (ኢ. ሠ. ፓ) cadres.<sup>80</sup>

### **Role of the first group**

As mentioned earlier, this group composed of Abdurehim Mohamed, Mohammed Yasin, Abdu Mohamed Ali et... This group was the Base and those who directly face atrocity, humiliation, and savaging of Benishangul community in town, sub-town, grass-root level and feeding those who are in the regime system about the discrimination within the society of Benishangul. In fact all member of this group was actively participating in a concealed discussion in Gondil but the role of Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi was significant because he was the one who deploys, convince and fund for journey provision for the youngsters to join the group and he helped the movement by his own finance and his own manpower. They were three and then eight in number and agreed since 1976 to deportee to Sudan for political asylum to conjoin with the second group in Sudan and they penetrated via Kurmuk to the land of Sudan.

### **Role of the second group**

This group was composed of students and the employee such as Khidir Ahmed, Yousif Hamid, Muslim Asheh, Atieb Ahmed Etc... and 80 members in the soldier of Benishangul youths in the dergue regime. This group was in discussion on how to confront and have resistance against the regime because of their humiliation toward their community of Benishangul during 1975/6. Due to the pressure and the panic of the members of this group, some of the groups like Atieb Ahmed and Muslim Asheh kept on silent and withdrawn from the discussion.<sup>81</sup>

But in fact, the situation was serious and needs the challenge so, the later top commander, the next ranked commander, and the chief executive of BPLM Khidir Ahmed, Madawi Abdurehim and Yousif Hamid respectively did their best and

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<sup>80</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>81</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

expatriated to the political asylum in Sudan in 1976.<sup>82</sup>,<sup>83</sup> Khidir was deportee with one militia called Aba' Idris from Kashaf of Menge and Merkenia Mustefa through shirkole border, Madawi and Yousif crossed Kurmuk in different time. At the time Yousif Hamid was the member of the parliament in the ruling of dergue regime and Khidir Ahmed was the head executive of Menge Awraja (today's woreda) and Madawi was a grade 9 student. Indeed, the situation was serious that let them to leave the positions and to struggle on behalf of their citizen in free lunch, ups down and weary. They held a first historical meeting with Sudan's higher officials at the end of 1976 in Khartoum in a historical place called Pension-Alsadaka for the nomination of party leaders. They nominate Yousif Hamid as head in charge of the party, Khidir Ahmed as deputy's head and Mohammed Yasin as the secretariat of the party and named as Aljebeha- Wataniya.<sup>84</sup>

### **Role of the third group**

This group was a Benishangul community who was displaced from the atrocity of Ethiopian rulers which comprises Hamedenil Alfaki, Atom Mustafa, Abdulrahim Yasin, Ustaz Jafer Zeruk, Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj, Bruza Ahmed, Ustaz Bushra, Ustaz albedri Hashim, and their fellows. This group was the majority of intellectual and has played a great role in the organization of the movement and participating in different central and other committees in the movement of latterly reformed as BPLM.

### **Role of the fourth group of Benishangulian Soldiers in the Sudanese Army**

Benishangulian soldiers in the Sudan defense force also played a significant role in the starting of the Benishangulian struggle for self-rule and identity. Benishangulian had been serving in the Sudanese Army since 1405 when Benishangul was under the fungi kingdom.<sup>85</sup> Almost all the soldiers were from part of the toddy's Assosa zone and Mankush and part of sedal woreda. According to

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<sup>82</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>83</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>84</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>85</sup> Informant commander Atieb Ahmed Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa



Khidir Ahmed Zide one of the top founders and top military commanders, there were about 400 enlisted Benishangulian militaries from the soldier of Sudan.<sup>86</sup>

Militarily, they were well-trained soldiers with a great deal of battlefield experience and knowledge of military tactics.<sup>87</sup> Despite their limited educational background, many of them were able to achieve certain ranks in the military power structure of the Sudanese Army and well used to train the new trainee soldier in collaboration with the second-ranked commander Mr. Madawi Abdurehim who was a crucial and influential in the struggle. He was formerly trained in Eritrea on military science and doctrine before the establishment of the armed force of BPLM to be a resource person for teaching the soldiers in the fields.

### **Role of critical mass behind the member of political elites.**

This is a group from where elites appeared and for whom they struggled. The group is the target group in the territory where elites considered as Benishangul which discussed in earlier chapters.<sup>88</sup> This is a group that played a tremendous role Being the source of finance, manpower, and served as intelligence groups and latterly served as a source of weapons and food during the birth of BPLM. Infect all citizen of Benishangul especially community of Benishangul tribe, the Gumuz and Kadalos of Guba, some part of toddy's sedal, a too-small number of Kamashi Gumuz and few numbers of Mao and Komo heroes irrespective of their age, religion and sex played their part in supporting the later BPLM.<sup>89</sup> In this regard due to the geographical proximity, the community bordering Sudan was facing a double burden of hosting the later movement of BPLM, especially people of Dull <sup>90</sup>area in Kurmuk was the front lines to take a burden of the movement and later on the great share of military burden taken by people of Kushmengel <sup>91</sup>and its surrounding localities.

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<sup>86</sup> Informant commander Khalil Mursal Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>87</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>88</sup> Informant commander Bushra Alkerib Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>89</sup> Informant commander Harun Almeda Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>90</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>91</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

## Role of six group

This group was a crucial and influential group in ELPA (ኢ. ሠ.ፓ) Ethiopian labor party of dergue. they played their part in giving valuable information through spy-like Ahmed Tajusir, Atieb Hassan, Nur-aldeen Ashanafi khojele Etc... about the dergue military occupied area their capacity and disputes within dergue as an opportunity to the strength of later appeared BPLM after the termination of Aljebeha Alwateniya in 1970s. They also used as a great source for armament and trained manpower to support the later BPLM.

## Problem with asylum (host country)

In 1976 after the entrance of political elites to the Sudan and identification of the role of each above-mentioned group the question of asylum and political movement has been forwarded for the country of Sudan.<sup>92</sup> At the time there was about four Ethiopian opposition who are on the movement namely, the EIF, TpLf, OLF and EDU. In addition, there was Sudanese opposition which latterly took over the regime of AL numeri former Sudan's president. The fifth Ethiopian strain opposition group who asked for asylum was Benishangul elites. The question of asylum has never got acceptance and never smoothly accepted by the communist party of Sudan due to their different political interest. But after tiresome discussion and influence made by a special group, some part of Sudan's government members have accepted the question of asylum. Finally, the elites named their Movement as Aljebeha Alwateniya<sup>93</sup> (Benishangul nationalism front) and latterly BPLM and started to deploy the initiative Alijina Attemhidia (Arabic means preliminary committee) which comprises 11 members for the arrangement of the movement so, they started the discussion with Benishangulian in Sudan who is

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<sup>92</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>93</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

interested in the struggle against the Ethiopian atrocity and savaging of our community.

Another arrangement also has been organized on the land of Benishangul secretly to engage in awareness creation, community mobilization and income generation activity by having eight members from the energetic group of the fifth group discussed above. But after a year of movement, one of the ELPA (ኢ. ሠ.ፓ) Ethiopian worker Mohammed (Gomera)<sup>94</sup> from the elite group family has been sent by dergue secretly to the elite group acting as an opposition man for dergue and collected the precious information about the source and who support to the movement disclosing the fifth group member who are deployed in the activity.

Finally, the government of Ethiopia has collected the fifth group member who was in the activity and about eight people led by Mohammed abuhazim killed in mass, more people confined to jail in Nakemte like Mohammed Abdulwahid, Abdullahi Mohammed Ali, Khalifa Abdela, Ashanafi khojele, Hajanur Hamid Afifi,<sup>95</sup> Alfaki Ashafi et...and majority of the group has deportee to Sudan again. The Ethiopian government also exerted the diplomatic pressure on Sudan to end up the acceptance to the so-called Benishangul nationalism front. Due to the pressure of the Ethiopian government and the interruption of the support from the Benishangul community and the suspicion of the Sudanese government on the Benishangul movement, the movement has come to an end and some of the group who started to continue secretly has been arrested and jailed in Sudan.

The destiny of the movement to continue become the assignment of a group of Khidir Ahmed, Abdurehim Mohamed, Madawi Abdurehim and the Yousif Hamid to search for another alternative. They agreed to deploy themselves into different works to capacitate themselves and to restore after a year. Abdurehim, Madawi and Yousif Hamid deployed to the trade and business have the objective of Benishangulism and system strengthening in the community in their daily activity secretly. Khidir Ahmed has taken a great share because from the elites he was

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<sup>94</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>95</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

Ethiopian soldiers with great rank skill full and talent and capacity of military doctrine.<sup>96</sup>

He took the lion share to be deployed as Sudanese citizens in Sudanese military but by the aim of Benishangulism.<sup>97</sup> Due to his fluency in different languages and the skill and ability in dergue military, the Sudanese government has given him the military commander of security of east Sudan bordering Benishangul. He used this as an opportunity in deploying more Benishangul soldiers to the soldier system of Sudan having the objective of Benishangulism and also, they have a communication with each other within the time of preparation for the restoration of the movement. The Sudanese government becomes to end up due to their internal conflict, so the time of restoration has come up and they started again to reestablish the movement because they were in good communication with the opposition group of Sudan who took the lead.

### **Summary**

Benishangul's community is the community faced atrocity, discrimination since the imperial time of Menelik and was people who showed their desperately rival and confrontation since the 1880's toward the emperor on Benishangul land accordingly. They are also the only local rulers who tried their best to agitate on their land and abroad on behalf of their community having six significant groups that played an important role at the initial stage of the armed struggle for self-rule and identity which latterly spearheaded by the BPLM. These groups were found among Benishangul youth who was facing atrocity in Ethiopia especially those who were led by Abdulrahim Mohamed Ashafi, Mohamed Yasin, Abdu Mohamed Ali, Yakub Abdulrahim, Adam Alhassan and the rest of their colleague those used to discuss on the issue in a place called Gondel.

The second group was those who were in the ruling system of the dergue which was led by Khidir Ahmed zide and Yousif Hamid Nasir and their hero followers. The third group was the Benishangul community who was displaced from the

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<sup>96</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>97</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa

atrocities of Ethiopian rulers which include Abdulrahim Yasin, Ustaz Jafer Zeruk, ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj, Bruza Ahmed, Ustaz Bushra, Hamedenil alfaki and latterly Atom Mustafa and their fellows.

The fourth group was a member of the Benishangul community who was in the Sudan armed force. The fifth group was a critical mass behind the member of political elites which is the hero civilian community of Benishangul. The six groups with the insubstantial role was Shanbel Hamis Bela, Abdin Ousman and al-mahadi Abdulrahim who played their role at late to the end of dergue regime contributing their armed force of "Hizbawi qumta" means the armed militia of indigenous Benishangul youths who were at the side of dergue with the lead of three above mentioned ESAPA cadres. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned key forces and a senior cadre of the movement have faced the thought-provoking situation with the asylum country of the Sudan that has led to taking hold of the movement of Aljebeha -Wataniya for 12 years but latterly spearheaded by BPLM.

### The Birth of BPLM, under Broadening the war and Fragmentation of BPLM as the military wing



Figure 4 Benishangul soldier

The first constituent meeting took place in the private house of Ustaz Jafer Zeruk in Damazine<sup>98</sup> for the restoration of Benishangul movement which started by including the intellectual group of Benishangulian who studied in Sudan. The objective was to establish the movement to free Benishangul land from atrocity, discrimination and to assure self-ruling and identity on the territory of historical Benishangul irrespective of the race, nation sex and identity of those community living on that territory<sup>99</sup>. strategically having self-rule and self-administration respecting diversified language, culture, ethnicity and common constitution of Ethiopia. But still the Sudanese government was refusing the formalization of the movement as an independent movement because of their country interest. The fear of Sudan's was of four types, one, was because the top-ranked courageous militaries in Sudan's army was Benishangulian origin.<sup>100</sup>

The second reason was that of the principle of giving and take determined by the finance of the movement, third BPLM was community born, community financed, community-supported and to that community.<sup>101</sup> But the sister movement OLF and TPLF was supported by the top European countries and there was a share for Sudanese. fourth, since the Benishangul and Blue Nile state community are of the same pedigree, in the long run they may claim also for self-ruling. So, the Sudan government was influencing the Benishangul elite group to be part of OLF in the struggle, but the two extremes were different in objective and strategies. As a result of the pressure of the Sudanese government, the movement disintegrated into two, one and which was a small group of 501 soldiers which led by Atom Mustafa was accepted to fight against dergue being within OLF and the second majority was still in negotiation to get formality and to struggle separately.

But the reason for the separation of the BPLM force remained unclear. After deadly negotiation Sudan's government has formalized the independent movement for Benishangulian and finally the heroes started in 1987/88<sup>102</sup> to have a new named

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<sup>98</sup> Informant Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed, Wednesday, April 14, 2019, 5:51:58 AM Assosa.

<sup>99</sup> BPLM political program -Sudan March 1988

<sup>100</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>101</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>102</sup> John young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

and well-organized movement by the continuity of the formerly set strategies to concoct for armed struggle. The group held a second historical meeting in place called the former name Abusogno (recent Hey -alzihur) in 1988<sup>103</sup> for enduring today's BPLM and agreed to name the movement as Harket-Tahrir sha'b Benishangul (Arabic means Benishangul people liberation movement).

#### Preparation for the Armed Struggle

In preparation for the anticipated armed struggle the group was distributed throughout the Sudan towns where they expect the Benishangulian to live and opened the office of military recruitment, for instance office in Adindir, office in Sinnar and organized giant office in Blue Nile city of Damazine.<sup>104</sup> Then smartly the program spread in the land of Benishangul and the youth was actively moved to the registration offices and camps promptly.

#### The camps and the life of military

The first camp for the training of the BPLM armed force was in the place called Daim Mansur bordering Kurmuk worda.<sup>105</sup>,<sup>106</sup> This Military camp was in charge of the next ranked commander and the first fighting military trained for the establishment of the liberation of Benishangul in Eritrea in the 1980s who is Madawi Abdurehim and his successor commander Ibrahim Ahmed and a total of around 40 trainees has opened and launched the camp at Adaim in the history of Benishangul armed force.<sup>107</sup> The Immediate camp opened, in addition, was that of Musfa ,Banet, jebel Aulia , Kerkrade , Ura and Jerdan and Bameza in charge of commander Husen Bendras. This all camps were on the land of Sudan and in Hager-selam of Tigray in two sessions in the 1980's.

The trainer and the whole structure of each camp was in charge of hero Benishangul combatants who was in the military of Sudan, for instance, Abdulbasit Hamedenil (Aba'sha), Ibrahim Ahmed zide, Abdu Hamed, Abdulwahid, Amir, Mukhtar Almamun, Rashid gulu, Hamid Abdullahi Bela, Hassen Abdela of Guba and Alfadil Yousif was in charge of training the new soldier in earlier begging of the

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<sup>103</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>104</sup> Informant Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed, Wednesday, April 14, 2019, 5:51:58 AM Assosa.

<sup>105</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>106</sup> Informant commander Khalil Mursal, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>107</sup> Informant commander Atieb Ahmed, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

armed force training. <sup>108</sup>But latterly numerous heroes were included and contributed undeniable part of scarification on training the new soldier in the land of Benishangul Ethiopia in camps like a camp of Abramo, the camp of Kusmengel and camp of Tsore Arumela and it was in free lunch. <sup>109</sup> This all camps established because there were an aggressive willing goal and objective of free and equitable Benishangul but there was no any organized source of logistic and facilities and the hop was to be on the hand of critical mass behind the movement which is the fellow citizen of Benishangul as a whole. As a result, the camps were established in the fast-track way and with no organized system, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biggest camp which accumulated above 800 new registered militaries within a week call for training, was Musfa camp. <sup>110</sup> In this camp, there were no basic necessity and logistic and there were no way to call for help to the critical mass for the support because Sudan's interest and the OLF was closing the way for the movement group not to pass to the land of Benishangul to call for help because as discussed in the above under " problem with asylum country" they were having a secret and robust strategy to weaken and halt the movement. <sup>111</sup>

Due to this problem, the trainee was in need of what to eat, what to wear and even medical service was not settled. They started to eat even non-edible vegetation and animals, which finally resulted in the life-threatening for the trainee called Fathy Abdurrahman who passed eating unrecognized vegetation root. Hence from 850 soldiers that were in Musfa camp some of them have discontinued training and rash to their own business. The rest of the soldier who was having broad-mindedness and strong objective for justice and free Benishangul has been in resilience and has been taken by their top and tactic full commander Khidir Ahmed to the soulmate of BPLM in Tigray Hegereselam to complete their training and military doctrine. <sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Informant commander Harun Almeda, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>109</sup> Informant commander Ismaeel Yousif, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>110</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>111</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>112</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk



The camp continued to train again new military by collecting logistics from (Ahelu-alkhir) Arabic means people of goodness not only to Musfa camp but also to all above mentioned Sudan's camps but the life was so punitive to the soldiers in all camps. nonetheless due to their esteemed intrinsic instigation, they continued to fire to the enemy missing lunch but eating dinner, missing diner but eating breakfast and sometimes they recompense by eating wild substance whether edible or non-edible only for the sake of life-saving. Despite the ups and downs, the BPLM has built strong and tactic full military power which was in fact stronger than the administrative and political wing in BPLM.

#### BPLM military operation

For an armed mass insurgence to take place needs a devoted political elite that can plan and lead the insurgent war against logistically and tactically stronger and deep-rooted armed forces. The ups and downs of mobilizing the community to wage the fighting is not just a series of corporal and emotional confrontations with a stronger opponent, but also multifaceted endeavors of fusing together foundations of a socially stratified society to stand up in harmony in supporting the movement that just started the war which the survival and growth of the movement would be unlikely. In this chapter we looked into how and why the 'groundbreaking elite' shifted its movement from struggle to eliminate the dictator of the Dergue as per the objective and strategy set in Sudan and fought against the sister movement of OLF in advance.<sup>113</sup>

Before the offensive war of OLF and BPLM went through, BPLM has been fought in small scale guerrilla attacks focusing on Dergue military especially in the border of Sudan resembling themselves as Sudan's militants and in fact, it was a Benishangulian secretly organized military within the Sudanese military force. At this Time the secret was hold between Khidir Ahmed who was leading security of Sudan's defense force at the border and Sudan's commanders. Sudan's commanders allowed Benishangul secretly organized group to fight dergue on behalf of them because Dergue was hosting the so-called SPLM and Sudan was eager to get a courageous group of Benishangul force to fight against dergue. The

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<sup>113</sup>Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

second small scale operation was on the border of Kasala where the dergue regime attacked the BPLM military while coming back from training of Hegereselam of Tigray in 1987/8.

This operation has resulted in the loss of about nine trucks with full military logistics which has been provided to BPLM from sister and the soulmate TPLF. In 1988 to the beginning of 1989, Benishangul land was occupied of three-armed force, the legal government of dergue, the OLF and the BPLM cross each other in day to day life trying to convince the people of Benishangul about their aim and importance to this community differently. In 1990 the ELF has steered a large-scale operation and surmount the Dergue from the land of Benishangul and immediately both OLF and the BPLM have got full opportunity to discuss and to move freely within people of Benishangul but unfortunately, the dergue re-occupied and controlled Benishangul again in late 1989.<sup>114</sup> Finally, ELF retreated from the Benishangul land and left OLF and BPLM to fight against dergue. While OLF and the BPLM started to fight against dergue having some group of BPLM led by atom in OLF and the separate BPLM led by Khidir in preparation to fight against dergue, the central government has been controlled by TPLF and the dergue regime fell down.<sup>115</sup>

The so-called OLF started to stole the resource of Benishangul around \$900,000 stolen from Assosa Bank which was belong to peasant association, the newly constructed hospital burned out the only electricity generator burned out and every modern institution distracted, humiliation and trying to hegemonizing people of Benishangul by provocation that you have no any right to establish an independent administration and self-ruling Because you are “black Oromos” you should have to be the part of Oromo unless your small and less logistically supported army of BPLM will face the great incursion from the huge and Germany supported OLF by putting their finance logistic and their plurality in number as the way for submission for BPLM.

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<sup>114</sup> John young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

<sup>115</sup> Mesfin Gebremichael PhD 2011, *Federalism and Conflict Management in Ethiopia: Case Study of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State*.

In fact, BPLM was from the people and to the people and they tried to persuade the OLF leaders to just leave the land of Benishangul peacefully but the military of OLF was so huge estimated to 100,000 including the Oromo soldiers who incorporated to OLF after the descent of dergue having miss interpreted assumption to defeat estimated 4,000 BPLM soldiers by their massive number.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, of the heartbreaking incident on the place called Agole where OLF killed an innocent mother called Husna was the first one-hour operation held with OLF. Everyone showed readiness to be part of the first risky mission since the BPLM's formation.<sup>117</sup>

Following this incidence, the BPLM started a huge scale of community mobilization throughout Benishangul land for community support in every aspect and also the OLF continued in the killing of any suspected innocents separately and in mass within Benishangul including innocent mothers and children. The second operation was that of Adaim on the land of Sudan.<sup>118</sup> This operation was attempted by Sudanese commanders and the OLF leaders to defeat and to come up with the end of the BPLM.<sup>119</sup> Actually, the operation was not expected by the BPLM armed force which resulted to the second and the third martyrs next to Sened of Dul who the first martyr was killed by dergue in the history of the armed force, but beyond thousands killed since the regime of Hylesilasie and dergue because of their opposition in their residents. In the battle of Adaim Maruf Abdela of Belmagoha was a radio communicator/operator of the army who was gunshot by heavy firearm, and he called Harun Almeda (Bireshe) after he injured, he was in a grievous stage of the death but still he was unfunctionalizing the radio for the sake of life-saving of his fellow heroes, saying "*Ana myitun walakin algadia yitawasel Istelim hatha aradio*" Arabic means "*am dying don't get ride off struggle and fear just overhand this radio and don't stop struggle we are now paying our precious life to free Benishangul so, go ahead*".

Then the army struggled and defeated the coalition of Sudano-OLF in Adaim/Bidin operation. The 3<sup>rd</sup> operation was in approximately January of 1990 in Shetalu, Dull

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<sup>116</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan , Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>117</sup> Informant commander Ismaeel Yousif, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa.

<sup>118</sup> Informant commander Atieb Ahmed, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa.

<sup>119</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge.

hode, Kurmuk successively in different time which was contributed to the huge damage of material and human life from the side of the enemy but also there was fall of martyrs from the side of BPLM and also there were the small scale of one-day operation with EDU at Mankush in today's Dangur on the border of Amhara (also look appendix-8 for detail operation areas).<sup>120</sup> After the fall of martyrs, BPLM has included the new trainee from the camps and scrambled throughout the land of Benishangul in all direction and outlets especially the focus was through the pocket area of Undulu where the operation was with some remnant of ELF and OLF cooperation which was for one day and night without interruption.<sup>121</sup>

The OLF used strategy of military propaganda by misleading the ELF to fight against BPLM under missed information as they are that of dergue troops.<sup>122</sup> And not only this the OLF was misleading some group of Benishangul community led by Wasilla of Bambashi saying "you are not Benishangul rather you are "Umeta fadhashi ""and you should have to fire to BPLM militaries and actually they did.<sup>123</sup> The operation of Undulu was the second intensive operation next to that of Adaim.<sup>124</sup> This was because of the support of EIF to the side of OLF and finally it resulted in the death of front-line hero martyrs like Suleman Gumbabe of Dule, Amir Abdela of Guba and other military fellows was in martyrdom<sup>125</sup> and there was damage in logistic as well.<sup>126</sup> The OLF dishonest and propaganda cost BPLM a lot of human life like Ahmed Musa and Yousif Almaki of Homosha the famous heroes in BPLM<sup>127</sup> military who killed due to dishonest of OLF by gun shooting at them and killed at the great camp of OLF at Homosha while they are with OLF militants on OLF military truck moving for negotiation of peace.

### **The great operation of Assosa**

<sup>120</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>121</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>122</sup> Informant commander Atieb Ahmed, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>123</sup> Informant commander Khalil Mursal, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>124</sup> Informant commander Bushra Alkerib, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>125</sup> Informant commander Harun Almeda, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>126</sup> Informant commander Ismaeel Yousif, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>127</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

BPLM has gone through different operation with dergue <sup>128</sup>, <sup>129</sup>and OLF but after ambivalence of BPLM with the situation of the OLF, the proliferation of speculations among BPLM and the critical mass behind them become in dim view of the prospects of success; and finally, BPLM has launched a camp at Kushmengel, Abramo and some few soldiers in Assosa town to strictly follow the devil action of OLF. In June 1992 the operation of Assosa was extremely and aggressively continued between estimated 300 to 8,000 soldiers of BPLM and OLF respectively for one and half days.<sup>130</sup> In fact, this operation was the gloomiest and the anguish operation in the history of the movement because the operation was very intensive and the OLF had seriously prepared themselves to thrill out BPLM from the town Assosa.<sup>131</sup> After intensified firearm the soldier was faced a shortage in armament and logistics that made them diffuse to the community to outflow from the attack due to lack of armaments for response and confrontations.

OLF used the Oromos those born in Assosa and fluent in Benishangul language to mislead the soldiers acting as a supporter and dozens of Benishangul soldiers have been killed in the houses of Oromo community who used to live with Benishangul community in harmony and solidarity before.<sup>132</sup> Not only this the Oromo community who used to live with Benishangul people in Assosa also informed on seven innocents non-armed youngsters who were an intelligence of Benishangul armed force namely, Atieb Hassan Atieb, Nure-aldeen Ashanafi khojele of Assosa and Mussa Ahmed of Bambashi, Etc.... has been killed in horrify, agonies and brutal killing in the town of Assosa in front of their significant other and community to brain print hatred toward BPLM. finally, OLF seemed to control and hegemonize to Assosa for one month.

Before January 1992 the BPLM military commander Khidir Ahmed Zide has sit down and decided with BPLM political and the party leaders to restore the attack to the OLF preparing for intensive and peasant supported war and appealing accordingly to a transitional government in Addis to interfere in the situation of the

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<sup>128</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>129</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>130</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>131</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>132</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

OLF domination over Benishangul which was against the aim, strategy, and objectives of the rebellion groups.<sup>133</sup> The transitional government held a conciliation program with two groups, but the conciliation seemed to be fruit full for time being putting around 200 soldiers from the so-called EPRDF peacekeeping group, but still, the OLF continued provocation toward BPLM military camps.<sup>134</sup>

The people of Benishangul were resisting and refusing the existence of any armed force other than BPLM force in the region because BPLM has been created out for the preservation of the national entity of the Benishangul community.

The BPLM has retreated from the town and based in Kushmengel and Abramo camps.<sup>135</sup> A base area was necessary in order to function as an organization that waged politico-military war, although the tactic had to be well-organized warfare until a substantial force was created to match the estimated huge military forces of OLF. Without a base area, it was difficult to cope with the almost daily arrival of newcomers to the camps because of the dismayed of OLF violence.

Here the movement quickly grew Squadrons of fighters and deployed from Kushmengel and Abramo in all directions to mobilize the people and attack the enemy whenever the opportunity arose.<sup>136</sup> Enemy-held towns were penetrated at night to reach Benishangul community members who used as a spy to give them assignments or receive reports, to punish or warn enemy collaborators, especially those who can inflict serious damage on the organization and its members and to attack enemy poles that hindered the BPLM mobility. In January 1992 a BPLM squads entered again to Assosa the capital of Benishangul, where a heavy OLF artillery unit was stationed.

Following ingress of BPLM to Assosa, the leadership unanimously decided to take abrupt tit-for-tat action with the aim of sweeping away the OLF forces from land of Benishangul focusing on the concentrated OLF camps in Assosa town, Inzing mountain up to Bambashi and Yabus river.<sup>137</sup> The deaths of numerous martyrs in the first Assosa war was the immediate cause of the political crusade to eliminate

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<sup>133</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>134</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>135</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>136</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>137</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

the OLF, but it was not the central cause, as some critics of the BPLM would like to believe.<sup>138</sup>

The plan to deal with the relatively stronger OLF was already in preparation and required a force with superior war tactics.<sup>139</sup> This demanded changes in the deployment of BPLM forces, which were at the time in five scrambling areas.<sup>140</sup> One Military fighting group was in Assosa town led by commander Ismaeel Yousif Almerdi and Atieb Ahmed as front and additional commanders in the appendix- 9, the second was at Anbesa chaka by the lead of commander Merkeni Ibrahim Daifela and Zeruk Hamdan and some commanding group in appendix -9, the third scramble was led by commander Ibrahim Ahmed zide on the way to Begi and the forth was led by commander Abdu Hamed Almerdi at Yabus river. <sup>141</sup>The fifth was of 200 EPRDF troops at the eastern part of Assosa and Amba 4 following the Ambas, absolutely the rest top and mid-level commanders led the operation directly. The OLF military was in fact strong in logistics and armaments but no do military. But in reverse the BPLM force was few in number but enthusiastic and combatant estimated to be 20 times less than the troops of OLF. Estimated 15,000 <sup>142</sup>OLF forces trooped to Assosa, not knowing that an infuriated BPLM force under commander Ibrahim Ahmed, Merkeni, Zeruk and Abdu hammed arrived in mountains of Bambashi and main roads to Oromiya. In the morning, OLF forces were completely encircled and after an aggressive battle that lasted no less than 36 hours, its forces were defeated. <sup>143</sup>

Two hundred and ten of them were taken as captives and the rest were either dead or wounded.<sup>144</sup> From the side of BPLM, we evoke two great memories at this moment, in fact, many martyrs passed in this operation but two memory was pulsating, the role of the only female fighter and the combatant 'Ama Zubeida' of Menge was historical and the descent of martyr and the very courageous and combatant hero Mahadi Abaubeda of Gumba after his dropdown of OLF flag by

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<sup>138</sup> BPLM political program -Sudan March 1988

<sup>139</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>140</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, in FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>141</sup> Informant commander Ismaeel Yousif, in FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

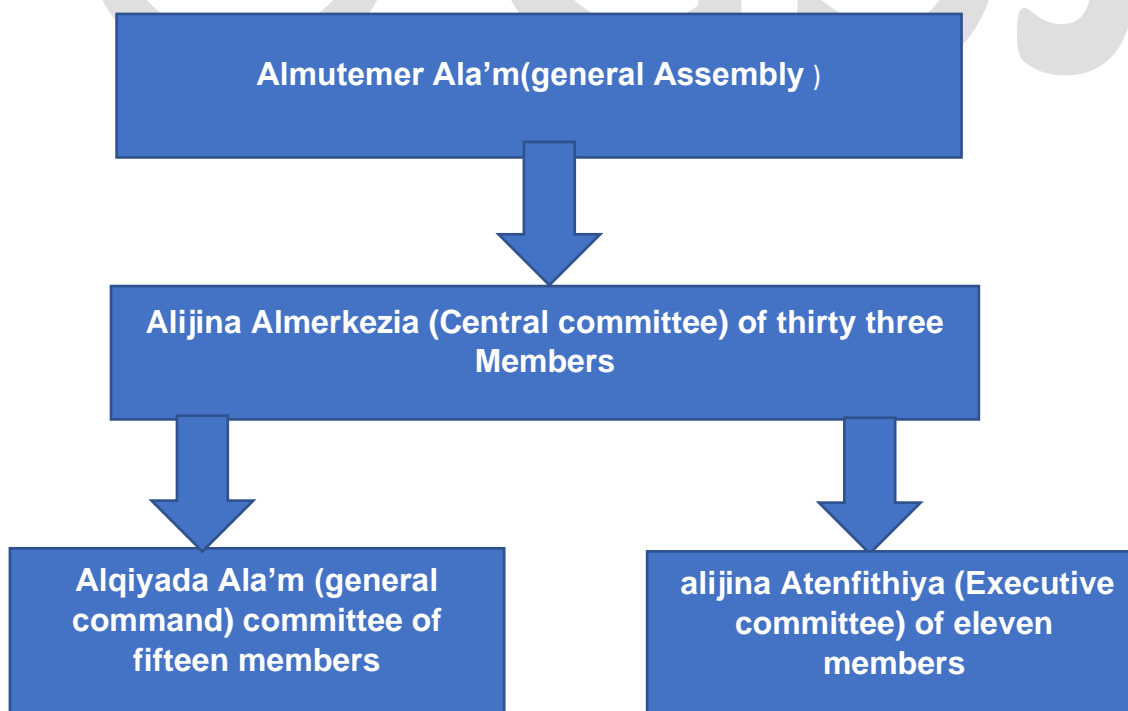
<sup>142</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>143</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>144</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

declaring free Benishangul hoisting BPLM flag for first time and ever in the history of Benishangul community.<sup>145</sup> The martyr was killed after his great momentum of hoisting BPLM flag by heavy armament from the upper mountain of Inzing and passed at toddy's Assosa Higher and pre-college school.<sup>146</sup> The overall operation victory over OLF declared after 36 hours of unreconcilable operation. Finally, the BPLM has gone through the establishment of a self-ruling sovereign regional state under the Ethiopian transitional charter declaring Assosa as the capital of the region and Arabic as an official language.<sup>147</sup> Following the declaration of the region as region six and Benishangul charter allowed every indigenous nation to have their own ethnic-based party other than BPLM namely Borshinasha democratic movement, Gumuz people democratic movement and Mao Komo democratic movement has been named as movement party for the competition of the election with BPLM for the administration of the region. The BPLM was organizational with its constitution, program and strategy as structured in the table below.

#### **BPLM organogram in Sudan 1988**



<sup>145</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>146</sup> Informant commander Ismaeel Yousif, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>147</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa



Figure 5 Structure of BPLM organogram

Source: - BPLM political program 1980s

## Summary

BPLM was born in 1976/7 after the demises of Aljebha Wataniya due to Sudan's government pressure. BPLM was the brand movement of Benishangul community with a clear scientific, modern and inclusive objective and strategy of the new progressive nation. But still the Sudanese government was forcing the Benishangul heroes to be part of a supportive group to OLF rather than being an independent movement which finally resulted in disintegration for military lead by atom to OLF and second pure Benishangul heroes led by Khidir to fight on behalf of their motherland.

After the challenge of the Sudanese government, the soulmate of the time for BPLM which is TPLF has taken the assignment to train BPLM at Hegereselam Tigray in the 1980s. inline with hegereselam military training, BPLM opened the office of military recruitment, for instance office in Adindir, office in Sinnar and organized giant office in Blue Nile city of Damazine. Then smartly the program spread in the land of Benishangul and the youth was actively moved to the registration offices and camps promptly. Adaim in the history of Benishangul armed force. The Immediate camp opened, in addition, was that of Musfa, Banet, jebel Aulia, Kerkrade, Ura and Jerdan. All camps were on the land of Sudan and in Hegereselam of Tigray in two sessions in the 1980s and latterly on the land of Benishangul Ethiopia in camps like a camp of Abramo, the camp of Kusmengel and camp of Tsore Arumela and it was in free lunch.

This all camps established because there were an aggressive willing goal and objective of free and equitable Benishangul, but the life of the camps was very serious for the trainee, because trainee was in need to what to eat, what to wear and even medical service was not settled. They started to eat even non-edible

vegetation and animals, which finally resulted in the life-threatening for the trainee called Fathy Abdurrahman who passed eating unrecognized vegetation root and the majority remained with no cloth but still, they were in camps having a strong will of free Benishangul.

BPLM military has moved through more than three operations before the offensive war of OLF. BPLM has been fought in small scale guerrilla attacks focusing on Dergue military especially in the border of Sudan resembling themselves as Sudan's militants and in fact it was a Benishangulian secretly organized military within the Sudanese military force. Finally, BPLM has offensive blood shaded operations with OLF that finalized by the defeating the 100 thousand estimated OLF military and swept away the OLF forces from land of Benishangul

Transitional periods, demises of BPLM and tragedy story of EPRDF toward Benishangul region 1995----2009

This will be the period from the transition to the establishment of the so-called BGPDP (Benishangul Gumuz people democratic party) but the current situation of 2018/19 was slightly warmed. In the previous chapters we have seen the process through which the Benishangul political and administration arena emerged and expanded at regional-wide and its contribution to modern Ethiopia. By peasant and community-supported, the Benishangul was able to grow and spread itself widely from the 1970s to the 1990s.

However, the social difference in clan group of Benishangul, Illiteracy, political and financial corruption was a negative opportunity for the direct interference of dirty fingers of the interested external politicians that made the region for failure, on another hand, the failure of the leadership to properly manage the strategy and create an all-embracing, disciplined, accountable and effectively centralized organization, which affected the implementation of the strategy negatively.<sup>148</sup> The political corruption for the position was of a clear alteration among BPLM leaders.<sup>149</sup> As a result, BPLM political and military leaders became more suspicious of each other than usual and often reacted with brutality for top military commanders for

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<sup>148</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>149</sup> Informant commander Harun Almeda, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

perceived threats. Ethnic sectarianism and an intense rivalry developed within and between the different groups of leaders and their followers.<sup>150</sup>

Consequently, BPLM failed to consolidate its gains. The growing discontent and grievances among the increasingly diverse group ideology, however, gave rise to the emergence of BPLM's second phase. The disintegration of BPLM leaders because of their political interest and the murdered attempted to Egyptian president Hosni- Mubarak in Addis Ababa was the great turning point for the demise of BPLM and the birth for rivalry group within BPLM founders which finalized by instability within the region and Assosa zone in particular.<sup>151</sup>

At the time of the disintegration of BPLM leaders in Benishangul, Hosni Mubarak killing was attempted in Addis Ababa, so the Ethiopian transitional government was searching for attempter at the murder and as the misfortune of Benishangul community, their leaders were on the fast-tracked competition for the position in the transitional government. Instability and disintegrations and disputes have gone over in all regional states except Benishangul. the central government took the disintegrations of BPLM leaders as an opportunity to number plate(labeled) the crime to BPLM group who declared the official language as Arabic just to let its people to repudiate Arabic language and to let EPRDF extend its hand to militarily strong BPLM to abolish the military power. <sup>152, 153</sup>

The major base for disintegration was started by the corruption of military rations and logistic by higher commanders,<sup>154</sup> and secondly, it was the tension for higher official positions<sup>155</sup> which used two groups labeling each one of those belongs to Khidir Ahmed and Atom as original Benishangul and those with Yousif Hamid and Ustaz Jafer as Sundanese non-Benishangul and finally accepted by the central government as Sudan's agent who are on behave of SNIF(Sudanese national Islamic front) and which remained as the party of BPLM and the group of Atom and Khidir renamed their party as 'semen mirab' party.

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<sup>150</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>151</sup> Informant Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed, Wednesday, April 14, 2019, 5:51:58 AM Assosa.

<sup>152</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa

<sup>153</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>154</sup> Informant commander Harun Almeda, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>155</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

In fact, BPLM was of populous supporter because of its brand to the community of Benishangul but also Khidir was individually of majority. The two group followers started to fight each other in the town of Assosa and spreading to other parts of Benishangul. On February 1993 due to the disintegration of the leaders two civilian has been killed by their opponents and combatant soldier Hamid Rehama was killed when they tried to raid Khidir Ahmed the former top commander and founder of BPLM in his private house, and latterly resulted in the murder of third-ranked military commander Ibrahim Ahmed the Brother of BPLM disintegrated leader Khidir Ahmed zide.

The group of Khidir Ahmed and Atom Mustafa has got the green light from the central government and decided to arrest those who are suspected to be the agent of SNIF who suspected by the Ethiopian government to collaborate to assassination attempted on Mubarak of Egypt. The Ethiopian government was in front fear of SNIF not to come through Benishangul to expand the so-called extremism by the name of Qur'an teaching and Arabic schools. But the reality behind the tragedy was to weaken BPLM who introduced and approved the Arabic language in Ethiopian first drafted constitution as an official language.<sup>156, 157</sup> Then after the Ethiopian government used this opportunity, interest, and disputes of BPLM leaders for the position, accusing some group from BPLM which comprises the vise president Jafer Zeruk, albedri Hashim, Ethiopia ambassador to Yemen Yousif Hamid and countless BPLM political and military leaders are accused, some of them deportee to Sudan and elsewhere in abroad and the majority are imprisoned savagely.<sup>158</sup>

Actually, the game of EPRDF was of a long time but it was not disclosed by BPLM leaders, because for example at that time in BPLM the only man from intellectual of Benishangul who have had over accumulated experience was Yousif Hamid. He served since Hylesilasie to dergue regime in a different part of Ethiopia in a different higher position but EPRDF refused Yousif Hamid not to be the candidate

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<sup>156</sup> Informant Atom Mustefa, Sunday, May 19, 2019, 7:43:23 AM Assosa.

<sup>157</sup> Informant Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed, Wednesday, April 14, 2019, 5:51:58 AM Assosa.

<sup>158</sup> John young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

for Benishangul presidential, but they used political propaganda and sent him to Yemen as ambassador.<sup>159</sup> In 1995 not only accusing Yousif Hamid, but they also tried assassination by a car accident to kill him through their intelligence bodies in Yemen that let Yousif to exile up until the time the researcher writing the history.<sup>160</sup> Jafer Zeruk was one of whom expatriates with his fellows and started the second phase BPLM taking training in Musfa Banet on the land of Sudan sending militants to restore the operation against the Ethiopian military which resulted in in a panic and serious instability and suspicious even among Benishangul society.<sup>161</sup>

Hundreds of civilians butchered from both sides the so-called second phase BPLM kill Benishangul civilian who suspected to work as intelligence for the Ethiopian government and also Ethiopian Defense force kill civilian again who suspected to act as intelligence and supporter on the side of second phase BPLM and the situation become a serious concern for a year for the regional and federal government.<sup>162</sup>

To dismiss this group Ethiopia used to have second phase SPLM who was in a struggle with the Sudan government to enter Sudan to fight and dismiss the second phase BPLM.<sup>163</sup> in fact, the coalition of Ethio-SPLM led for dismissal of this group from the land of Sudan and transferred to Eritrea. Though, the Ethiopian government becomes focusing on the Benishangul leaders specially the founders of BPLM those tolerated in Ethiopia, Atom Mustafa and Khidir Ahmed as a “semen mirab party to participate in the first Ethiopian electoral session of 1995.<sup>164</sup>

Generally, all the games in Benishangul onward remained on the hand of EPRDF to manipulate as they need through the federal security body and the so-called “agar drigit “means Amara national democratic movement, OPDO, TPLF and SNNM acting EPRDF in Benishangul as the loyalist of the Ethiopian government.

<sup>165</sup>In this regard, the Benishangul government was of puppet under ANDM

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<sup>159</sup> Informant Yousif Hamid Nasir, Wednesday, January 18, 2019, 3:02:08 AM Australia

<sup>160</sup> Informant Yousif Hamid Nasir, Wednesday, January 18, 2019, 3:02:08 AM Australia

<sup>161</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>162</sup> Informant Sabil Albehit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>163</sup> John young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

<sup>164</sup> Informant Atom Mustefa, Sunday, May 19, 2019, 7:43:23 AM Assosa.

<sup>165</sup> Informant Sabil Albehit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa

because every question that should be raised was through consultation of ANDM especially Addisu legesse was of the frontline, for example, the legal direct communication of regional president should and can be direct with the prime minister but at the time to come in discussion with late prime minister Melees Zenawi to BG leaders was through Addisu Lagasse or the ANDM. So, following the political hegemony of ANDM in BG, this loyalist group started to pour fuel in the fire within sister parties of Benishangul <sup>166</sup>by assigning Yaregal Ayisheshum who was not in the interest of the struggled BPLM community. Finally, Yaregal and the loyalist of ANDM disintegrated Atom and Khidir and preparing Manifesto to establish other opponent groups to Semen Mirab which called “Ethiopia Berta drigit” when the historical mistake happened to name the ethnic group whom BPLM struggled to as Berta.

Due to the pressure of the federal security bodies, the over years-built identity of Benishangulism become devalued.<sup>167</sup> The game from EPRDF continued and arrested Atom the head of Semen mirab and tested the destiny of the BPLM members who are jailed and displaced. <sup>168</sup>

However, the above mentioned “Agar drigit” especially those of ANDM attempted political game again to arrest the rest of former BPLM leaders and arrested Abdul-Mahmud Ibrahim the vice president of BG, Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj, and Khidir Ahmed has been jailed and releasing Atom from jail.

Finally, the so-called EBPDO (Ethiopia Berta people democratic organization with few intellectuals continued to lead the party belongs to the Benishangul community.<sup>169</sup> As the routine evil action of the EPRDF they called the recently released Atom to take the already prepared manifesto with approved party name called “Addis Hyle” means new power party without any request from this group but to challenge EBDO not to get political stability within the region. The group led by Atom in the name of Addis Hyle party resulted in acuteness toward EBDO. And

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<sup>166</sup> Informant Sabil Albehit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa

<sup>167</sup> Informant Commander Khidir Ahmed Zide, Saturday, January 4, 2019, 2:35:03 PM Assosa

<sup>168</sup> Informant Atom Mustefa, Sunday, May 19, 2019, 7:43:23 AM Assosa

<sup>169</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

this all unrest within Benishangul tribe was attempted by the so-called EPRDF, loyalists of EPRDF and the president Yaregal throughout his frauded votes of the election of 15 years governing.

In all this fifteen year of deception the so-called second phase BPLM led by the military wing commander Abdul Wahab Mahadi and logistical support from the former BPLM party head and the Ethiopia ambassador to Yemen Yousif Hamid, his son Ustaz Khalid Yousif and the former founder of BPLM Ibrahim Yousif who displaced to exile after five-year atrocious imprisonment in Benishangul, they strived in sending guerrilla fighters from Eritrea to fight against the Ethiopian government.<sup>170</sup> In fact, the guerrilla fighter was the majority of experienced former BPLM military member who was asking about the compensation that has been committed/promised by the government to be paid to those military members who choose to demilitarize themselves during the unification of the military of Regions to centralized one command military of the country, but the promise was transgressed by the regional as well as the national government. As a result of disobeying of promises and the violation of the rule of law arresting so many Benishangul citizen, let even teenagers be an affiliate of the second BPLM in Eritrea.<sup>171</sup>

This instability of killing the Benishangul community from both sides continued since the Yaregal come to power in 1996/7 for 12 years. the loyalist of the region (agar drigit and the federal security bodies) in collaboration with Yaregal continued to magnify enmity of Benishangul party (EBPDO) to the sister parties of the region. Surprisingly as John Young stated in his study in 1999 with the title "Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambela and Benishangul in Transition" the Berta with 116000(CSA:1996) holds fewer seats than 107,000 Gumuz which was not formal rather it was simply quota by chairperson Yaregal under the loyalist EPRDF security body and agar drigit who led the region secretly<sup>172</sup>. And according to data by Asnake Kefale surprise representation in BG as following in table below

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<sup>170</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>171</sup> Informant Commander Merkeni Ibrahim, Saturday, March 3, 2019, 1:55:10 AM Menge

<sup>172</sup> John Young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

## The ethnic composition of B-G council which brought to dispute

Ethnic group	Population	% total Population	% of representatives
Bertha	122 883	26.7	35
Gumuz	107 495	23.4	43.7
Shinasha	32 105	6.9	7.5
Mao-Komo	3 843	0.83	5
Others	194 133	42.17	8.75
Total	460 459	100	100

Source from CSA 1994 and Compiled HoF appointed non-partisan Committee (2001).<sup>173</sup>

“Not only this, Berta with the majority and dispersed population holds only seven woredas and Gumuz with lesser population holds eleven woredas which is almost nearer to double of that of Berta”. Ultimately the question of woreda expansion has been asked by the so-called Berta community for a long time especially the community of Undulu area<sup>174</sup> of Menge woreda, but the question of woreda expansion has been rejected by president yaregal and some deviant group of EBPDO by politicizing the constitutional question to create disintegration among EBPDO members which finalized by torture, beating community by federal police and loyalist cadres and the tear-jerking occasion of killing the hero, combatant former BPLM and later Ethiopian D.F member who was living in physical disability military member Siraj of Undulu who killed in front of his own community in the meeting in Undulu in 2008. Nevertheless, the question of the Undulu community was that of the constitutional right of article 49 (3,2) of the BGRS constitution which allows the establishment of new administrative units when raised and when is necessary.<sup>175</sup>

Due to the pressure that happened on Benishangul leader, community and disproportion of the seat as illustrated above on the regional council and the government positions, the so-called EBDO has nothing to do in every decision of

<sup>173</sup> Asnake Kefale, 2012, *Federalism and Autonomy Conflicts in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region*

<sup>174</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>175</sup> Proclamation no. 31/2003 revised constitution of the Benishangul Gumuz regional state.



the central committee and executive committee. so, all infrastructure has gone to Metekel by the pressure of Yaregal and secretly led by ANDM. <sup>176</sup>In fact, Assosa zone is the populous zone, are the founder of the region and is the capital of the region but due to the mischief of Yaregal, the beginning institution in the region like teacher training college and the health science college has been built in Metekel zone but in reverse in Assosa zone there were no any organization built or planned to be built. Amazingly throughout the administration of Yaregal the question of building the offices of the Assosa zone as did in Metekel and Kamashi by the decision of BPLM before the existence of national parties in Benishangul, yaregal was refusing not to have any sustainable and durable developmental buildings in Assosa Zone. Nonetheless it was the BPLM that established Kamashi Zone and Gilgel Belles from nothing during the transitional period.<sup>177</sup>

But the secret Behind the refusal of Yaregal was led by ANDM to weaken Benishangul Party even to come to an end. So, the so-called EBPDO appealed to the federal government for the article 47 of the constitution to have a self-independent regional state for Benishangul ethnic in separate which has got the acceptance by HOF members as constitutional inquiry. Following the raise of article 47, Yaregal Ayisheshum in collaboration with the so-called the EPRDF loyalists mentioned above has attempted their routine action on Benishangul leaders as a whole, as a result Benishangul leaders resigned and walked out from regional office structure to maintain their question of article 47. <sup>178, 179, 180</sup>

Following their withdrawal from government structure, the new strategy to come up to end of the party led by Benishangul born bright-minded youngster, the devil strategy was set by ANDM and the deviant Yaregal by organizing and arming Amhara Militias who live in Benishangul especially in Bambashi <sup>181</sup>and Assosa woredas to operate and fire on BG leaders to create instability to criminalize its

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<sup>176</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>177</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>178</sup> Informant Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi, Wednesday, February 18, 2012, 12:48:12 AM Assosa

<sup>179</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>180</sup> Informant commander Khalil Mursal, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>181</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

leader, but the strategy failed because of strong political response from EBPDO. The federal government exerted pressure on some leaders to back to the offices and to arrest the front-line leaders. Actually, some member of EBPDO has been convinced by EPRDF to simulate the question as not the question of people rather of few groups in the interest of official position, but the question was of great majority people and actually some leaders come back to offices after one year of resignation and as attempted the rest are jailed.<sup>182</sup>

Because of the severity of the problem and mischief happened on the Benishangul community, these all leaders were in their homes without any payment and their step of application and petition to central government and payment for walked out leaders were dealt and run by the community contributed supports for 12 months.<sup>183</sup> But then again EBPDO continued another alternative of the so-called Zonal national council which can give full responsibility for the Benishangul community to real self-rule. Then after all the loyalists and presidents, Yaregal continued to criminalize the EBPDO not to be succeeded in the question of Zonal national council rather to remain under their guardian. In fact, the hope of EBPDO member was on the alternative that proposed as Zonal national council which incorporated in the revised constitution of BG 1995.<sup>184</sup> But the national council remained in the paper and or infringed after the imprisonment of EBPDO members even if it was constitutional up until today July 2019. Due to this all injustice the EPRDF by the lead of late prime minister Meles Zenawi has given the short cut order to the president to back to the region and to resign, but the loyalist egoist ANDM and yaregal finally searched for another alternative to reverse the decision of Meles and they got those of second phase BPLM in Eritrea and then via security body, they ordered the military opposing group in Eritrea to come and massacre people on the way to Kurmuk in 2008 to criminalize the EBPDO and to restore his presidency position.

So, the political propaganda that attempted by loyalists of EPRDF especially of ANDM and president Yaregal strongly succeeded by the massacre of innocent

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<sup>182</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>183</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>184</sup> Proclamation no. 31/2003 revised constitution of the Benishangul Gumuz regional state

citizens in Famatsere in 2008.<sup>185</sup> Lastly their attempt finalized by imprisoning all Benishangul Higher officials in serious violence, atrocity, and savaging and even plundering their private property. Leaders such as Sabil Albehid vice president, Khalifa Mohamed- Assosa zone chief executive, Zeruk Hamdan the EPRDF parliament member and the former higher commander of BPLM, AL nazir -Ibrahim regional capacity building Beauru head, Ismael Yousif -Homosha woreda chief executive and founder commander of BPLM, Abdu hammed Bambashi woreda security office head and founder high ranked commander in BPLM, Madawi Abdulrahim the second-ranked commander in BPLM and health office head of Homosha woreda, Mustafa Musa atom Homosha Wereda finance head and former BGRS secretariat head, Abdulbasit hammed vice of Kurmuk woreda administration and former BPLM commander, Asadik Albehid Asosa zone finance head, (Yasin Ishak- Homosha security office head and Mohamud Abdurrahman-kurmuk woreda spokesman ) who are both has died in prison of ziway and the rest myriad leaders have been jailed in mass due to make up and attempted criminal for the range of 5---25 years' imprisonment each.<sup>186</sup>

The fate of Benishangul community remained in the hand of loyalists to deploy new young intellectual but not politically strong youngsters from Benishangul community to be confused by the so-called "Amarar cadre siltena" means political cadre training to be under their guardian but so do not another sister party especially the Mao-Komo and the Boroshidin and even EPRGF did not reform to new youngsters because they already planned to confuse and mislead the newly assigned politically not strong Benishangul youths and it was actually political calculation. Latterly it resulted in the birth of the so-called "Benishangul Gumuz people democratic party" which is "agar drigit with no vote and no participation in the federal central and executive committee and under the domination of EPRDF who nominate the chairperson/president for BG region under the consultation of the loyalist security bodies in the region secretly.

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<sup>185</sup> Informant Sabil Albekhit Tuesday, May 29, 2012, 4:17:44 AM Assosa.

<sup>186</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

The so-called BGPDP comprises an executive committee of equal four-members irrespective of majority people or other criteria but is based on simply blind quota. This party more or less is now operating in the region applying legacy of the former president and EPRDF loyalist in magnifying the enmity of Benishangul community to other sister communities through sophisticated social media, security bodies, journalists and other complex machinated and fabricated propaganda to weaken the Benishangul community.

### **Summary**

By peasant and community-supported, the Benishangul was able to grow and spread itself widely from the 1970's to the 1990's. However, the social difference in clan group of Benishangul, Illiteracy, political and financial corruption was a negative opportunity for the direct interference of dirty fingers of the interested external politicians that made the region for failure, on another hand, the failure of the leadership to properly manage the strategy and create an all-embracing, disciplined, accountable and effectively centralized organization, which affected the implementation of the strategy negatively. Subsequently, BPLM failed to consolidate its gains, however, it gave rise to the emergence of BPLM second phase which resulted in more instability and printed the BPLM-phobia in the Mind of Benishangul community. The major base for disintegration was started by the corruption of military rations and logistics by higher commanders, and secondly it was the tension for higher official positions. Then after the Ethiopian government used this opportunity, interest, and disputes of BPLM leaders for the position, accusing some group from BPLM which comprises the vise president Jafer Zeruk, albedri Hashim, Ethiopia ambassador to Yemen Yousif Hamid and countless BPLM political and military leaders are accused, some of them deportee to Sudan and elsewhere in abroad and the majority are imprisoned savagely. Finally, EPRDF used this dispute as an opportunity and completely used to manipulate the region as a puppet and simply figurative government

## Why BPLM-phobia in the considerate community of Benishangul nation.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine why the majority of Benishangul tribe/nation lacks confidence when the name BPLM brand mentioned, by focusing on tragedy story happened and or happening in the region since the demises of BPLM up until 2019 regional situation.

The BPLM (Benishangul people liberation movement) was the first political party in the region, established in 1976 as Aljebeha Wataniya and latterly in 1988 as BPLM but John Young in his study in 1999 in a biased way stated as a movement only established since 1989 in Sudan.<sup>187</sup> His study was biased because he did not come through interviewing the founders of the movement rather, he focused and relayed in interviewing the founders of EPRDF who do not know or biased at the beginning of the movement in detail. BPLM also can be proclaimed loudly as it is the basement for the establishment of a self-ruling region known as Benishangul Gumuz region and can be concluded that unless the existence of BPLM no separate region was established on the west Ethiopia called BGRS.<sup>188</sup> The movement was principally composed of the Benishangul nation, although there were some members from other ethnic groups of the region especially from the Gumuz. <sup>189</sup>Its main aim was to exert a revolutionary war against the Dergue having a clear objective and hand able constitution and program unlike the idea of researcher Asnake Kefale who mentioned in his study of federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia as BPLM failed because of lack of clear objective but in reverse, the Snake's study is one seems to like what lacks objective because he came in interviewing neither the BPLM founders nor the so-called Berta community rather he more relayed on community and who do not know more about BPLM. But in the misfortune of the Benishangul community, in the 1st half of 1992, the BPLM experienced serious internal dissent and chaos. The problem and opposition started among BPLM fighters who were dissatisfied with the leadership. Its origins

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<sup>187</sup> John young 1999 *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition* Cambridge University

<sup>188</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>189</sup> Asnake Kefale, 2012, *Federalism and Autonomy Conflicts in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region*

were in fact thought to be found in the military ration miss use and miss conduct of leaders in 1992. 190

In that year, the military members began to criticize the BPLM leaders “for their practice of patronage politics, corrupt leadership, clash of ideological clarity and undermining of each group created within BPLM. Their initial demands of the fighters did not appear to seek secession within BPLM; rather seemed to democratize the organization from within.<sup>191</sup> They called for organizational reforms and also demanded a fresh congress to be held in order to debate on a broad range of policy issues. Chiefly among these was the relationship between BPLM leaders and the combatant group and the question of ceasing the corruption. 192

By February 1993, the divergence was aggravated and splits occurred widely among the different BPLM military units and the leaders that led to the real demolition of BPLM, blench of its community and telescoping and interference of interested group into regional affairs. In a similar fashion the stepwise BPLM-phobia here started by an external interested group to play a lion share role by labeling the leadership of BPLM as Sudan’s agent and the original Benishangul which seemed as a success for opposition groups. Finally, the clear disintegration between BPLM leaders and their strong military wing has played a dark paramount shift in the political paradigm of the region and has overthrown their brand role into a deep abyss.<sup>193</sup>

Following these disintegrations, the faction who was labeled as Sudan’s agent and non-Benishangulian who started to stand on the name of BPLM as the party has been marginalized from the side of EPRDF and those who was on the side of EPRDF by deceptively telescoping their enmity by overlooking their importance for the establishment for Benishangul Gumuz region and by publicizing the panic and threat news within the critical mass who was on behalf of BPLM and whom BPLM struggled to.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Informant commander Harun Almeda, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

<sup>191</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>192</sup> Informant Commander Madawi Abdurehim, Tuesday, March 6, 2019, 6:28:40 AM Assosa.

<sup>193</sup> Informant Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed, Wednesday, April 14, 2019, 5:51:58 AM Assosa.

<sup>194</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

This panic was to create hatred first within the Benishangul nation itself and to let co-existence of Benishangul Gumuz regional nations in question which was accomplished through central actors assigned by EPRDF as senior cadres as advisors.<sup>195</sup>

The advisors were vigorously involved in decision-making and became primary powerhouses and shakers in the region by having another label as “Agar drigit”, means loyalist of EPRDF and freely gives a hidden full right to have the regional operating security officers and heads only to be especially from TPLF and ANDM as a loyalist of the government and Benishangul nations as “Gudifecha Lij” means child of adoption and or as the second citizen in Ethiopia who do not live for Ethiopia. The security bodies in Benishangul Gumuz has dealt and engaged in clear recruitment of testimony against any leader or any opposing individual especially on Benishangul ethnic group by preparing testimony for makeup crime and routinely for any petty crime the already prepared testimony will be trained by security body how to give false - truth like testimony on Benishangul leaders and people.

Nevertheless, this community paid a lot for the existence of both contemporary and classical Ethiopia even if more scholars deny and did not write their contribution. Due to political sensitivity and brandy of BPLM to Benishangul community, Benishangul community started to avoid labeling that given by the EPRDF loyalist especially of that of Egoist ANDM and security body to BPLM leaders, their military and supporters as “Sudan’s agent, shifta, Tsere-selam, (enemy of the peace) Koblayoch (Skippy) and finally they wanted to restore the liberation in 1997 again on the border of Sudan. But amazingly at the time of this restoration the Benishangul community as a whole irrespective of their political ideology was labeled as “Tsere selam” to print in their mind the so-called BPLM-phobia and hatred.<sup>196</sup>

In fact, the Benishangul community till recent time can’t raise the question of equality and equity because the so-called EPRDF loyalist has printed in mind of

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<sup>195</sup> Asnake Kefale, 2012, *Federalism and Autonomy Conflicts in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region*

<sup>196</sup> Informant Commander Zeruk Hamdan, FGD Wednesday, March 7, 2019, 3:20:36 AM Assosa

all citizen of Ethiopia as Benishangul nation are “Tsere Limat” but look under title of Benishangul community contribution in Ethiopian affair, and this was the actually planed political propaganda to weaken political participation of Benishangul nation. Subsequently due to this all planed hatred toward the Benishangul community since the demises of BPLM, the nation has faced pestilent and extremity.<sup>197</sup>

According to data from Benishangul general attorney 2019 shows the data from Benishangul only two woredas data of two years imprisoned community members was 515. <sup>198</sup>So, if 515 community was prisoned in two years from 2 woredas, starting from the year 1995 since the demises of BPLM until 2019, in a minimum about 21,630 people have been imprisoned, thousands have been displaced to abroad. Oddly and unusual deaths in prison have happened on three BPLM leaders and founders such as Abdulbasit Hamedenil, Yasin Ishak and Mohamud Abdurrahman and more people have been deceased in prison-related with BPLM, hundreds killed from both side from Ethiopian defense force and from BPLM second phase guerilla fighters. Due to the above displacement imprisonment and killings hundreds of spouses divorced.

The above figure no doubt in contributing to both reversible and irreversible socio-medical problem within the majority of Benishangul community and recently the hatred has changed its style giving make up criminal testimony and politically motivated crime on Benishangul community and their leaders as criminals<sup>199</sup> including innocent mothers and sisters by violating human right of liberty, thought, opinion and expression and assembly by emancipating dishonest propaganda, if two or more Benishangul sited together or walked in mass if discussing in the group they gave the connotation of as they are sitting to operate on other nations.

It was actually the old connotation used to inflate the BPLM-phobia since the presidency of Yaregal ayisheshum , if one of Benishangul nation raised any democratic and development question in the opposite of them, has given a connotation of “ this is thought of BPLM so, “jerbaw yitena” means investigate

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<sup>197</sup> Informant Commander Abdulbasit Hamed, 120515\_001.MP3, Kurmuk

<sup>198</sup> Informant Prosecutor A.K Thursday, June 4, 2019, 7:04:32 PM. Assosa

<sup>199</sup> Informant Prosecutor A.K Thursday, June 4, 2019, 7:04:32 PM. Assosa



what behind his question, even surprisingly if this connotation is given to somebody, and if there was an opportunity of any career, will not be provided to the son of a connotated person as BPLM supporter because of fear of authority to be exposed to the so-called “Gingema” because if the opportunity given to a connotated individual as BPLM member or thought, the authority fear of to be fired from his or her position or automatically will be jailed.

Accordingly, due to this multiple propaganda and the legacy of recent government (2019), for the nations other than Benishangul nation as a loyalist of the government and are the pure Ethiopian, leaded Benishangul people not to have right of assembly, liberty and even moving freely in their homelands is not expected.

And almost all criminal acts under investigation in Benishangul Gumuz region is operated by the so-called “Tezewawari chilote” means the central attorneys move in some region especially Benishangul to act on criminal investigation and reviews under the assumption of skill gap and lack of neutrality<sup>200</sup> of the lawyer of the regions by violating the constitutional jurisdiction article 80 which recognize same court structure and power in all level and all regions. Also, the proclamation No 25/88 which annulled the power of some regions to be under the so-called ‘Tezewawari chilote’ especially in Benishangul did not explain clearly what will be on the neutrality if tribal conflicts abrupted but it gives neutrality power for those only working on Federal courts irrespective of their educational level, race, geographical origin or social connection of the judge to the issue of the panel but revers for those working in regional courts. The proclamation 25/88 also failed to consider the right of accused people which proclaim that every accused person should have to receive a charge and the decision timely unless it will be considered as “delayed justice” <sup>201</sup>likewise as BPR illustrates, any criminal investigation should get final decision within 2 months, but the proclamation does not consider all this in Benishangul Gumuz region.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Informant Prosecutor H.M Thursday, June 5, 2019, 7:04:25 PM, Assosa

<sup>201</sup> Informant Prosecutor H.M Thursday, June 5, 2019, 7:04:25 PM, Assosa

<sup>202</sup> Informant Prosecutor H.M Thursday, June 5, 2019, 7:04:25 PM, Assosa

For example, amazingly to show clear injustice, biased and discrimination in Ethiopia today,(2019), Ethiopia has passed through inter-tribal conflict since 2016 at different levels and different regional states between the sister nation. For instance the huge and great conflict between Gedeo of south and Guji Oromo, conflict in SPNNR in Awasa capital of the south, the long-ranged conflict between Oromo and Somali Ethiopia, the conflict between Somali and afar in a repeated way, conflict in Harar between Oromo and natives, conflict in Dire Dawa between nations, the conflict between Oromo and other nation than Oromo in Burayu and Addis Ababa, the conflict between Angwa and Nuere in Gambela, the conflict between Oromo and Berta -Gumuz in Benishangul, the conflict between Oromo and Amhara at Kamise Zone, the conflict between Amara and Kimant in Amhara, Mass killing of Amhara on Gumuz in Jawee and Dangur.

In this, all inter-tribal conflict Ethiopia has faced material and loss of thousands of lives. So, to investigate and to take unbiased and nondiscriminatory measure on the evildoers or criminals, the investigation group has been established to all area having inclusion of all government level even to the lower level of Zones but painfully, and unjustly manner, the conflict that happened in Benishangul in particular by violating all action taken in another region to have independent investigation group without the inclusion of either regional or zonal government structure in BGRS.

Prosecutor of BG regional attorney Said: - "the establishment of the investigation and review committee was not justly, and it was not as per law, it was not multi-disciplinary, not diversified but it has fallen under the political influence rather than rule of law. For example, in Assosa conflict the first group of investigators from federal, themselves was those who are known in evil action by making accused people sign on plain paper and then writing what they need after the accused person put the signature, but they have been mischief our region having the power of neutrality by the name of the federal worker. Surprisingly the police investigator was dishonestly writing what is not said by the accused person and some police investigators also acted as testimony and as investigators on the same suspected

personalities. And the accusation was directly forwarded not on some group as criminals, but it was directed to the so-called Berta tribe as a nation but do not do other nation. majority of Berta, Gumuz injured, died but no other ethnic group either investigated nor accused”.

So finally, around 430 for both Kamashi, Assosa and Metekel conflict suspected individuals have been arrested in a biased way and are in jail for a year without any testimony till the time the researcher writing the history.

Nonetheless oppositely, individuals' others than Benishangul and Gumuz who were a cause for the death of hundreds Gumuz in jawee and Dangur, 70 Gumuz death in Kamashi, 2 Benishangul deaths in Assosa conflict, hundreds of injury and millions of material looting and destruction happened on Benishangul community but surprisingly about 46 non-Benishangul people has been listed for accusation and testimonies has been heard but still today none of them brought to justice and all those suspected in Gumuz mass killing in jawee and Dangur has been released in Amhara region because of clear violation of rule of law in the region as well as the federal level has also shown clear limitless biases and interference.

But the top-secret behind these assignments of “Tezewawari chilote” and the biased committee was not for the sake of citizen interest rather it was for political consumption.<sup>203</sup> This political consumption was aimed to chase the struggling and bright-minded leaders of Benishangul nation without criminal acts that discriminately imprisoned leader such as Babakir Khalifa central, executive committee member and head Regional agricultural bureau head and former BPLM fighting military, abdulmuniem Abdulwahid- Environmental protection bureau deputy head and central committee member, Kemal Mohamedali BGRS natural resource Mineral and energy agency director , Assosa Zone police office head commander Usman Mohammed, commander Rejeb Ismaeel the BGRS police commission special force deputy head, Tewfiq Abduljelil BGRS construction bureau deputy head, commander Harun Hairela Assosa zone crime protection director, Ahmed Yousif ( Assosa Zone security head in charge ) and the rest Hundreds of their imprisoned crew including heart-rending and pathetic

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<sup>203</sup> Informant Prosecutor A.K Thursday, June 4, 2019, 7:04:32 PM. Assosa

imprisonment of innocent women such as Hawa Mohamed Ahmed and Sitti Idris has been arrested by makeup criminal, political motivated, biased, discriminated and disgraces full acts of BGRS polis commission investigating police officers. Also amazingly the central committee and Regional council member such as Babakir Halifa, Mahil Amir (security head of Shirkole) and Tsgaye Tesema head of sport commission has been arrested by infringing the Benishangul Gumuz Regional Council Revised Code of Conduct and Ethics No.119/2018 February 2018 article 97 which assert that any parliament and or council member with immunity protection can be accused and or be arrested after the justice and security standing committee of any level reviewed and approves and then the member of the council approve the review for the arrestment<sup>204</sup> of the suspected individual but consciously the rule of law has been dishonored by the federal government and approved by the regional government.

### **Summary**

The BPLM (Benishangul people liberation movement) was the first political party in the region, established in 1976 as Aljebeha Wataniya and latterly in 1988 as BPLM. BPLM movement was principally composed of the Benishangul nation, although there were some members from other ethnic groups of the region especially from the Gumuz of Guba. The main aim was to plinth a revolutionary war against the Dergue having a clear objective and hand able constitution and program.

But in the misfortune of the Benishangul community, in the 1st half of 1992, the BPLM experienced serious internal dissent and chaos. In that year, the military members began to criticize the BPLM leaders “for their practice of patronage politics, corrupt leadership, clash of ideological clarity and undermining of each group created within BPLM. Following these disintegrations, the faction who was labeled as Sudan’s agent and non-Benishangulian who started to stand on the name of BPLM as the party has been marginalized from the side of EPRDF and those who was on the side of EPRDF by deceptively telescoping their enmity by

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<sup>204</sup> Revised Code of Conduct and Ethics for Benishangul Gumuz regional Council Members No.119/2018 February 2018.

overlooking their importance for the establishment for Benishangul Gumuz region and by publicizing the panic and threat news within the critical mass who was on behalf of BPLM and whom BPLM struggled to.

This panic was to create hatred first within the Benishangul nation itself and to let co-existence of Benishangul Gumuz regional nations in question which was accomplished through central actors assigned by EPRDF as senior cadres as advisors. Due to political sensitivity and brandy of BPLM to Benishangul community, Benishangul community started to avoid labeling that given by the EPRDF loyalist and security body to BPLM leaders, their military and supporters as “Sudan’s agent, shifta, Tsere-Selam, (enemy of the peace) Koblayoch (Skippy) and finally, they wanted to restore the liberation in 199- again on the border of Sudan. According to data from Benishangul general attorney 2019 shows the data from Benishangul two woredas data of two years imprisoned community member was 515. So, if 515 community was prisoned in two years from 2 woredas, starting from the year 1995 since the demises of BPLM until 2019, in minimum about 12, 360 people have been imprisoned thousands have been displaced to abroad. Oddly and unusual deaths in prison has happened on three BPLM leaders and founders and more people has been passed away in prison-related with BPLM hundreds killed from both side from Ethiopian defense force and from BPLM second phase guerilla fighters.

Due to the above displacement imprisonment and killings hundreds of spouses divorced. It was actually the old connotation used to inflate the BPLM-phobia since the presidency of Yaregal ayisheshum , if one of Benishangul nation raised any democratic and development question in the opposite of them, has given a connotation of “ this is thought of BPLM so, “jerbaw yitena” means investigate what behind his question, even surprisingly if this connotation is given to somebody, and if there was an opportunity of any career, will not be provided to the son of a connotated person as BPLM supporter because of fear of authority to be exposed to the so-called “Gimgema” because if the opportunity given to a connotated individual as BPLM member or thought, the authority fear of to be fired from his or her position or automatically will be jailed.

And almost all criminal acts under investigation in Benishangul Gumuz region is operated by the so-called “Tezewawari chilote” means the central attorneys move in some region especially Benishangul to act on criminal investigation and reviews under the assumption of skill gap and lack of neutrality of the lawyer of the regions by violating the constitutional jurisdiction article 80 which recognize same court structure and power in all level and all regions. Also, the proclamation No 25/88 which annulled the power of some regions to be under the so-called ‘Tezewawari chilote’ especially in Benishangul did not explain clearly what will be on the neutrality if tribal conflicts abrupted but it gives neutrality power for those only working on Federal courts irrespective of their educational level, race, geographical origin or social connection of the judge to the issue of the panel but revers for those working in regional courts. But the top-secret behind these assignments of “Tezewawari chilote” and the biased committee was not for the sake of citizen interest rather it was for political consumption.

Without exercising the power that given by Ethiopian and BG constitution justly and consciously, the fate of Benishangul citizens is in dread.

#### **Limitation of the study**

Limited information due to recall bias

Resource limitation (time, manpower, vehicle, and budget)

Information controversies

#### **Recommendation of the researcher**

I strongly recommend the future of study on Benishangul to be extensively invested and expanded to assure transferability of the finding

Multidisciplinary participation in the study of Benishangul History should be considered in future studies.

Governing party and government should help and facilitate the writing of the struggle history of BPLM.

The Government should commemorate the Martyred day

The government should build monumental for martyrs at all levels.

The government should give full recognition for the BPLM struggled member.

Regional government should give affirmative action for sons of martyrs in opportunity

Regional government should come back and look re-organize the BPLM members in economic development activities.

Regional government should give at least respect, recognition and honor to the BPLM community.

Have the council of elders (sheikhs) to solve disputes and or reconciliation

### **Acknowledgment**

Various individuals contributed in so many ways to the completion of this study.

My earnest gratefulness goes to all of them.

I would like to forward my deep heartfelt gratitude to my colleague who provoked me to study this great event in a great time. And also, great honor to Mr. Abdunnasir Ali who has gone through incessant document support throughout my research conduction.

I am deeply grateful to my advisor Dr. Kamal Abdulrahim and Mr. Abdulwakil Hassen for their demonstrative support and guidance throughout the research undertaking. I am obliged to many BPLM founders and military members who helped me in providing plentiful information for the preparation of this historical book. I am particularly grateful to Barta national council spokesman Mr. Hasebela Azen who helped me in legalizing my research and providing a letter of support for the cooperation of stakeholders in giving their valuable information. The love, care and endless support of my beloved wife Merriam Husen and my lovely young children Ayatulah Mohammed and Sirur Mohamed, who remained habitually with me in essence rather than in the surface while moving through this tedious responsibility

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## Appendix -6 The personal profile of BPLM founding leaders

1, **Former Ambassador Mr. Yusuf Nasser** was born in the Basheer Sheikhdom or Kebele, on Friday 1/11/1436 Hijri in Islamic Calendar, in Gregorian Calendar 13/12/1939 in Assosa district. His father was Hamid Nasser Ibrahim and his mother was Khadija Yusuf. His father was killed by the Italians when he was young; he lived orphans without a father. However, they were raised up by Sheikh Hussien Al-Nazir. After the killing of his father, his mother was married to her cousin Hussien Al-Nazir who raised them as his children. Nasser completed his secondary school in Kotobe - Arat Kilo Addis Ababa. He joined the University of Haile Selassie in 1968. In 1970/80's he was the only Benishangul born man to be a university graduate.

Yusuf Nasser was the first of the earliest founder and the chairperson of the Benishangul Peoples' Liberation Movement (BPLM), which was established in 1986. The first attempt to find a revolutionary organization was in 1976 when a few of Benishangul revolutionaries arrived Khartoum, the proposed name for the organization at the time was Aljebeha Wataniya (National Front).

As a university graduate, Nasser was elected to serve in the Ethiopian parliament and different positions in Ethiopia since the reign of Haile Selassie and Dergue. He also was the pioneers in the revolutionary action taken against Christian King of Haile Selassie in the slogan of land for a tiler. In 1964 at the age of 25 years old, he and his stepfather Hussien Alnazir stop Tax in Basheer. He also served as an Ethiopian ambassador to Yemen under the EPRDF. But due to his opposition to the discriminative and illegal interference within the domestic affair of Benishangul Region, the EPRDF has attempted to assassinate him in Yemen where he was granted asylum. and then he was deported to exile, now living in Australia.

2. **Mr. Khidir Ahmed Zide** was born from his father Ahmed Zide and his Mother A'na Mohammed Ibrahim in Goltsahaha kebele in 1952 in Assosa Awraja, Assosa woreda. He was one of the earlier founders and the deputy chairperson of BPLM after the descent of the former Aljebeha Wataniya that attempted its establishment in Khartoum in 1976. Khidir Ahmed Zide has joined his secondary school in Fiche and spoken English school in Sudan and joined Aljebeha Alwataniya and later

BPLM at the age of 26. In 1970/80's he was the only Benishangul born man to be a dergue military commander and then district chairperson in Menge during dergue regime. but due to the savage and atrocity that happened on Benishangul community he has crossed the border of Sudan with his spouse Merkenia Mustefa to agitate against dergue by establishing Aljebaha Alwateniya and later BPLM in 1988. He served as the first top commander in BPLM up until the demises of BPLM. He also served in different civilian higher official positions in BGRS after his release from no less than five years imprisonment.

3. **Ustaz Jafer Zeruk** was born from his father Mustefa A'bdun and his Mother Meka Itnain Qureshi in Bashir Godheyu kebele in the 1950s in Kurmuk worda Assosa Awraja. He was raised up by his uncle Zeruk A'bdun. He was one of the earlier founders and the secretariat of BPLM. Jafer Zeruk has joined his Khalwa theological school in Horezab in Kurmuk worda and his primary school in Kurmuk Sudan and then his secondary school in Alruseries boarding school and his university study in Sudan. Jafer Zeruk was a Benishangul born man who has displaced to Sudan since 1950, because of the outrage and taste that happened on Benishangul people. After the transitional government of Ethiopia under EPRDF, He served as BPLM military higher commander and then vice president of BGRS but due to his opposition to the discrimination and illegal interference within domestic affair of Benishangul Region, the EPRDF has declared imprisonment on him and then he deported to exile now living in Sudan.

4. **Mr. Ibrahim Yousuf** was born from his father Yousuf. He was born in Agussha kebele, Assosa Warada in 1961 and the Assosa district. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee member and political affair of BPLM. Ibrahim Yousuf has joined his secondary school in Sinnar and his university at Mansoura University in Egypt in 1980. Ibrahim Yousuf was a Benishangul born man who has displaced to Sudan when he was 5 years old because of the outrage and taste that happened on Benishangul people. After the transitional government of Ethiopia under EPRDF He served as BPLM higher political official but due to his opposition to the discrimination and illegal interference within the domestic affair of

Benishangul Region the EPRDF has imprisoned him for more than five years atrocious imprisonment and then he deported to exile now living in Australia.

5. **Mr. Abdulrahim Mohammed Ashafi** was born from his father Mohammed Ashafi and his Mother Hawa Siraj in Alubo (former Gere) kebele in 1943 in Assosa Awraja. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee member and economic affair of BPLM after the descent of the former Aljebeha Wataniya that attempted its establishment in Khartoum in 1976. Abdulrahim Mohammed Ashafi has joined his secondary school in Dembidplo and joined Aljebeha Alwataniya and later BPLM at the age of 25. In 1970/80's he was one of the members who tried to gather in a place called Gondel to establish an agitating group against dergue. But due to the savage and atrocity that happened on the Benishangul community he has expatriate the border of Sudan with his fellow group to agitate against dergue by establishing Aljebeha Alwataniya and later BPLM in 1988. After cessation of Aljebeha Wataniya he was deployed in business at Yabu's Alkubri but finally his Business was totally used for support of the movement later on BPLM. He served as the first high-top political official in BPLM up until the demises of BPLM. He served as a higher official in BGRS after his testimony of atrocious imprisonment.

6. **Mr. Abdu Mohammed Ali** was born from his father Mohammed Ali and his Mother Amna Alfaki Mustefa in selga (recent Sharia) kebele in 199 in Assosa Awraja. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee member and political affair of BPLM. Abdu Mohammed Ali has joined his secondary school in Dembidplo and TTC in Nakemte and joined BPLM at the age of 30<sup>th</sup>. In 1970/80's he was one of the members who tried to gather in a place called Gondel to establish an agitating group against dergue. But due to the vicious and brutality that happened on the Benishangul community he has expatriate the border of Sudan with his fellow group to agitate against dergue by establishing BPLM in 1988. He served as an ordinary military, military commander and translator in BPLM because Abdu Mohammed Ali was a multilingual and youngster of the group who was able to speak Arabic, English Amharic, Oromifa and his vernacular language fluently. Then he has been elected as Benishangul Gumuz regional president in the transitional period of Dergo-EPRDF until his savaging

imprisonment for not less than five years. Finally, Abdu Mohammed Ali has served since dergue regime and passed on Saturday April 2012 but tear-jerking, his family did not receive any retirement pension.

**7. Ustaz Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj** was born from his father Mohamed and his Mother Alharem Alfaki Abumedien in Kushmengel kebele in 1959 in Assosa woreda Assosa aworaja. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee and economic affair of BPLM who joined BPLM at the age of 30<sup>th</sup>. Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj has joined his secondary school in Damazine and his university study in Sudan Khartoum university in Arabic linguistic college. Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj was a Benishangul born man who has displaced to Sudan since the 1950s because of the barbarity and discrimination that happened on Benishangul people. Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Siraj was also one of the intellectual groups who used to study in Sudan who played a marvelous role in organizing the movement and documenting the constitution, program and strategy of the movement. After the transitional government of Ethiopia under EPRDF he served as BPLM higher political official and served in countless higher decisional areas of BGRS. but due to political disintegration and political makeup incrimination he has imprisoned for no less than five years sever imprisonment and now working freewheeling.

**8. Ustaz Bushra Anur** was originally from the family of Bambashi district and was born in a borderline place called Shali. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee and social affair of BPLM. Ustaz Bushra Anur has joined his secondary school in Sudan and his university study also at Omdurman University in Sudan. Ustaz Bushra Anur was Benishangul's origin whose father has displaced to Sudan since 1950s because of the outrage and taste that happened on Benishangul people. Ustaz Bushra Anur was also one of the intellectual groups who used to study in Sudan who played a wonderful role in the movement. After the transitional government of Ethiopia under EPRDF He served as BPLM higher political official and then as an Ethiopian Muslim agency worker in Addis Ababa representing BGRS. But due to political disintegration and political makeup

incrimination, Ustaz Bushra was imprisoned for more than five years and has gone to exile and now in Sudan after his release from atrocious imprisonment.

9. **Mr. Bruza Ahmed Atom** was born in Kurmuk Awraja (district). He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee and public relations of BPLM. Mr. Bruza Ahmed Atom has joined his secondary school in Sudan his university study in Egypt. Mr. Bruza Ahmed Atom was a Benishangul born man who has displaced to Sudan since the 1960s, because of the outrage and taste that happened on Benishangul people. Mr. Bruza Ahmed Atom was also one of the intellectual groups who used to study in Egypt who played a marvelous role in the movement. After the transitional government of Ethiopia under EPRDF He served as BPLM higher political official. But due to political disintegration and political makeup incrimination Mr. Bruza Ahmed Atom was declared to be prisoned and has gone to exile and now in Sudan.

10. **Hamedenil Mohammed Alfaki Ahmed** was born from his father Mohammed Alfaki and his Mother Fatima Ahmed Hamed in Horezab Negurendu kebele in the 1950s in Kurmuk worda Assosa Awuraja. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee and social affair of BPLM. Hamedenil Alfaki has joined his secondary school in Kurmuk and Alruseries of Sudan and his university study in Sudan Khartoum. Hamedenil Alfaki was a Benishangul born man who has displaced to Sudan since the 1950s because of the outrage and taste that happened on Benishangul people. Ustaz Bushra Anur was also one of the intellectual groups who used to study in Sudan who played a marvelous role in the movement. After the transitional government of Ethiopia under EPRDF He served as BPLM higher political official. But due to political disintegration and political makeup incrimination Hamednill Alfaki was declared to be prisoned and has gone to exile and now in Sudan.

11. **Mr. Medewi Abdurehim** was born from his father Abdurehim Abuhazim and his Mother Bachata Bedewi in Yaqedho kebele in 1955 in Assosa Awraja Assosa district. He was one of the earlier founders and the central committee member and military affair of BPLM. Mr. Medewi Abdurehim has joined his secondary school in Assosa secondary school and joined BPLM at the age of 20<sup>th</sup>. In 1970/80's he



was one of the members who tried to establish an agitating group against dengue called Aljebeha Alwataniya and has been trained in Eritrea for six months as fighting military for the establishment of Aljebeha Alwataniya for the first time in the history of organized movement. After the cessation of Aljebeha Wataniya he was deployed in business merchandize and finally his business has been used for strengthening the movement. He was also the only military commander who teach the military members about military doctrine in the camps. He served as a military commander and the central committee of the movement. In 1990 Mr. Medewi Abdurehim was the military commander who has been severely injured in operation between OLF and BPLM which finalized to permanent damage of his extremities and become paralyzed. due to political malaise, Medewi Abdurehim was imprisoned for more than two times no less than ten years and now living with a severe physical disability and without patron and caretaker.

#### **Other Influential people**

**1.Mr. Atom Mustefa** was born from his father Mustefa and his Mother Fedayiel Ahmed in Washa kebele in 1943 in Menge Woreda Assosa Awraja. He was one of the BPLM founders but disintegrated in very few months but finally he immediately incorporated to BPLM in Assosa with the Benishangulian troops that he used to lead in OLF which was the great additional power to BPLM military wing. Atom Mustefa was included to the BPLM founder and Assigned as a party affair of the BPLM but in few months he disintegrated from BPLM and formed a union with OLF with some Benishangul born soldiers. after some operation confronted with OLF and the pressure from Benishangul community on him to unify, he has back again to BPLM with all Benishangul military members, then after a transitional period and he assigned as the first president to BGRS. He served also as a high-top political official in BPLM up until the demises of BPLM. He also served indifferent higher official positions under EPRDF after his several years of imprisonment.

**2.Mr. Mohamed Yasin** was born from his father Yasin Khojele and his Mother Assit Alfaki Alejba in Addis Ababa Gulele sub-city in 1947. He was one of the earlier founders of Aljebeha Wataniya in 1976 as the secretariat of the movement,

and Later BPLM member who paid their parts in BPLM. He also served as BPLM officials and finally served in different higher positions and officers under EPRDF after punitive atrocious prison happened on him

#### Appendix -7 Some founders of Aljebha wateniya

S, no	Name	Education	The year
1	Yousif Hamid	1 <sup>st</sup> degree	1975/6
2	Khidir Ahmed	8	1975/6
3	Mohamed Yasin	11	1975/6
4	Abdu Mohammed Ali	Diploma	1975/6
5	Nur-adiem Abdurehim	8	1975/6
6	Yaqoob Abdurehim	12	1975/6
7	Medewi Abdurehim	10	1975/6
8	Abdurehim Mohamed Ashafi	10	1975/6
9	Asheh Abdurehim	6	1975/6
10	Abdullahi Mohammed Ali	12	1975/6
11	Yousif Yasin Nasir	6	1975/6
12	Abdurehim Al-umda	8	1975/6
13	Adam Alhassan	9	1975/6
14	Omer Ali sinja	6	1975/6
15	Dawood Mohammed Ali	6	1975/6
16	Merkenia Mustefa	---	1975/6
Military trained to this movement			
17	Khidir Ahmed	6-month Military training	1980's
18	Madawi Abdurehim	6-month Military training	1980's
19	Adam Alhassan	6-month Military training	1980's
20	Shema'un Mustefa	6-month Military training	1980's

#### Appendix- 8 BPLM Military operation areas in detail

1	Agani /Agole operation of seven hours
2	Bela-qendo operation of half day
3	Ahensha operation of around three hours
4	Afimiya operation of about five hours
5	Amingilostu operation of about 10 hours
6	Dul Hode operation of about 2 hours
7	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dul hode operation of about 12 hours

8	Dul Shetalu operation of about 15 hours
9	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dul Shetalu operation of about five hours
10	Undulu operation of about 30 hours
11	Bidin operation of about 6 hours
12	Abadi operation of about one hour
13	Kurmuk operation of about 8 hours
14	1 <sup>st</sup> Assosa operation of about 9 hours
15	2 <sup>nd</sup> Assosa operation of about half day
16	3 <sup>rd</sup> Assosa great operation of around one days
17	Anbesa chaka operation of about five hours
18	Begi Road operation of about one hour
19	Dabus Bridge operation of about four hours
20	Ya,a Mesra operation of about 24 hours
21	Yabus Alkubri operation of about one hour
22	Guba operation with EPP (ኢ.ህ.ፓ) of about half a day
23	Almahal operation of about five hours
24	Biyabulu operation of Guba which took half an hour
25	Jima Homosha operation of about 30 minutes

#### Appendix -9 Some higher BPLM military commanders

S. No	Name of the commanders
1	Khidir Ahmed
2	Medewi Abdurehim
3	Harun Khidir
4	Ibrahim Ahmed zide
5	Abdu Hamed
6	Abdulbasit Hamedenil
7	Abdulbasit Hamed
8	Zeruk Hamdan

9	Atieb Ahmed
10	Merkeni Ibrahim
11	Yousif Alhalifa
12	Ismaeel Yousif
13	Harun Almeda (Bresh)
14	Bedredin Mubarek
15	Khalil Mursal
16	Mohammed Shehadin
17	Ibrahim Mohamud (Rafed)
18	Asadik Kedal
19	Babakir Khalid (Agulu)
20	Mohammed Abajebulun
21	Imam Ibrahim
22	Bushra Alkerib
23	Fedlala Nasir
24	Abeker Ali
25	Fatur Abdurrahman
26	Alhasim Idris
27	Hassen Abdela
28	Mohammed Abdurrahman
29	Hissen Bendas
30	Asir Babakir
31	Ahmed Musa

### Appendix -10 Partial martyrology (catalogue) of BPLM stars.

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Fathy Abdurrahman         | 22. Abduljelil Abdurrahman  |
| 2. Sened Asaiem              | 23. Ibrahim Idris           |
| 3. Umar Asheh                | 24. Ahmed Idris             |
| 4. Yousif Umer               | 25. Gemeredin Mussa         |
| 5. Awad Babakir              | 26. Usman Serketi           |
| 6. Suleiman Gunbab           | 27. Mohammed yousif Babakir |
| 7. Atahir Mustefa of Guba    | 28. Atieb Hassan            |
| 8. Yasin Babakir             | 29. Nuredin Ashanafi        |
| 9. Ubaid Uthman              | 30. Mussa Ahmed             |
| 10. Rehmetela Riziq          | 31. Mustefa yousif          |
| 11. Ferej Sadela             | 32. Sa'ad Mohammed          |
| 12. Arbab Albuki (Nike name) | 33. Rejeb shawush           |
| 13. Faisel Abdulwahab        | 34. Ahmed Musa              |
| 14. Maruf Abdela             | 35. Mohammed said saleh     |
| 15. Ashenafi Aturalu         | 36. Yousif Almaki           |
| 16. Azubair Ali              | 37. Siraj Sead              |
| 17. Bedewi Filell            | 38. Mahdi Abaubeda          |
| 18. Asidik Wedyayu of Guba   | 39. Awad Mansur             |
| 19. Alamin Easa              | 40. Asheh Umer              |
| 20. Ahmed Ahosheli           | 41. Asherief Anur           |
| 21. Mohammed yousif          | 42. Babakir martyr***       |

43. Ebed Uthman
44. Ahmed Ahulen
45. Ibrahim Afudi
46. Bedewi Adam
47. Albedri
48. Abdurehim Musa
49. Idris martyr\*\*\*\*
50. Yousif martyr\*\*\*\*
51. Negura Musa
52. Bushra Mustefa
53. Abdurrahman
54. Mohamed Abdurrahman
55. Ali Almamun
56. Jafer martyr\*\*\*
57. Mohammed Aba'mazin
58. Ahmed Yousif
59. Mustefa martyr\*\*\*\*
60. Amir Kot (Nik name)
61. Amir Etman
62. Harun Khidir
63. Mohamed Abu Umda
64. Yousif martyr \*\*\*
65. Musa Muzammil
66. Ibrahim martyr\*\*\*
67. Mohammed Hashim
68. Awad Jenbu
69. Asheh Mansur
70. Hamid Anur
71. Mohammed Khalifa
72. Arbab Abandon
73. Mohamed Bayan
74. Asabir Anur
75. Alfadil Yousif
76. Asadik Adara
77. Fetrari Osman
78. Ibrahim Afudi
79. Ahmed Gala
80. Mohamed Nasir
81. Bedewi Filell
82. Asadik Rejeb
83. Mohammed of Buldigilu
84. Ashafi (Negura) Musa
85. Ahmed Ashayib
86. Ibrahim Oromo
87. Abdulsalam Ashuni
88. Alnazir Bayan
89. Ali Mohamed
90. Khalifa Mohamed

91. Mussa of Alubo

Appendix -11 BPLM Military Camps

Camp name	Country/place
Adaim	Sudan
Musfa	Sudan
Kerkeda	Sudan
Jebel-Aulia	Sudan
Ura	Sudan
Jordan	Sudan
Hegereselam	Tigray
Abramo	Benishangul Ethiopia
Kushmengel	Benishangul Ethiopia
Tsore	Benishangul Ethiopia
Assosa	Benishangul Ethiopia
Bameza	Benishangul-Guba Ethiopia